

THE DARK SIDE

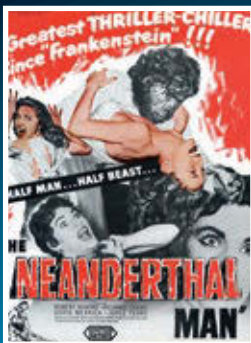
Issue 174 £3.99



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TERROR MOVIE
TIE-INS



**CALL
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VIDEO
NASTY ICON
INTERVIEWED



**'X' CERT
MEMORIES**
WHAT THE
CENSOR SAW



**FRIGHT-
MARES IN A
DAMAGED
BRAIN**
AUTHOR - DAVID
MCGILLIVRAY

THE DARK SIDE

The Magazine

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ENJOYING YOUR ARMCHAIR ODEON

On the rare occasion that I go and see a movie at the cinema these days, I tend to opt for watching it at the rather spiffy Olympic Cinema in Barnes, former home town of the late Nigel (*Quatermass*) Kneale. The Olympic costs about twice as much as your normal picture house but the seats are really comfy, with loads of leg room, the sound system is sensational (Dolby Atmos) and most importantly for me the image is always incredibly bright because, unlike a lot of the modern day High Street cinema multiplexes, they don't run their bulbs into the ground.

Otherwise I view movies at home, projected on a ten-foot screen by my Sim2 Grand Cinema projector, which like those *Hollywood Chainsaw Hookers*, cost me an arm and a leg. The picture quality is excellent and turned up to eleven my 71 sound system is better than Q-tips for clearing the wax out of your ears. My ex-wife once went for a night out with the girls while I stayed in for film session with the boys (or was it the other way round?) and told me she should could hear it from the bottom of the road. And we were only watching a Mike Leigh film. It's like WW3 round here when we crank up the latest *Fast and Furious*.

It's all a long way from when I bought my first 8mm sound projector in the early 1970s, a Eumig no less, and started collecting cut-down versions of feature films to show my mates. The sound then was generally quite muffled and the image frequently difficult to discern, but the novelty value made it all worthwhile. I was, after all, the only person in my entire social circle with the ability to project the skeleton battle from *Jason and the Argonauts* on my bedroom wall. Who needs sex when you have that? To pay for my hobby I used to hold film shows at the Waitrose store where I worked, and caused quite a controversy one night when I showed an extremely gory American trailer reel for *Blood Feast* and *2000 Maniacs*, which proved too much for many in the audience. Mind you, it wasn't as sick-making as today's John Lewis Christmas adverts.

Nowadays my hobby is not an exclusive one. I am sure that lots of *Dark Side* readers have their own impressive home cinema set-up, whether it be projector or giant screen telly. These may not match up to the biggest and best cinema screens around, but your choice of viewing is far more varied. When I stick on a Blu-ray of some great old 60s Hammer Horror I am fully aware that this is the only way I would be seeing something like this on the big screen these days.

In my view, watching movies on the big screen should never be a solitary experience. Even in my old 8mm days I used to love giving film shows or inviting my pals round to watch my latest acquisition. For some reason we got into a rhythm of having a show every Sunday, accompanied by a Vesta Ready Meal Curry. They didn't taste anything like a real curry but we were easily pleased in those days. Nowadays it is Film Night at *Dark Side* Towers roughly once a month on Fridays, and I usually serve up my patented chilli con carne, a dish so hot that even Satan would politely request a glass of water and a toilet break. My regular guests include next-door-neighbour Tony, a former Pink Floyd roadie who has seen more action than Cynthia Payne's window cleaner, and my late sister Gillian's good friend Heidi, who watched *Jason And The Argonauts* on my bedroom wall at the age of 11. Heidi is still a bit of a modern girl and was not keen on *Machete*, but as she gets older I am sure she will appreciate the sexual magnetism of Danny Trejo. Also on the regular guest list is my old Waitrose mate Gav, who runs *Gavantiques* in nearby Stoneleigh, an antiques shop that makes Steptoe and Son look like Harrods.

Yannie attends as well of course, though if the film choice is not appropriate she may be off into the land of nod before it's time for the Kia-Ora break. For some reason she has never made it through a *Fast and Furious* film. "They aren't realistic," she says. Don't know what she's talking about, I drive like that all the time. I love my film nights though, because good movies are all about sharing the experience. My projector is out of action now because of my house rebuild, but as soon as we get back in I am going to show them *Wild Tales*, which is so much fun and a film that they would never see in a million years otherwise.

Being a critic has been devalued these days because of the internet, but we all love discovering hidden gems and passing them on to our friends. *Wild Tales* is a gem indeed, but as this year's BAFTA winner it is hardly undiscovered. Voted top picks among my home audience were the Kurt Russell thriller *Breakdown*, Keanu Reeves' *John Wick* and the Irish musical *Once*. I should point out that everyone seemed unimpressed by *Fight Club* when I first screened it. Well, they didn't talk about it afterwards.

Anyway, more and more of us will be enjoying the big screen experience at home if Steven Spielberg, Peter Jackson and JJ Abrams are right. These Hollywood titans are backing a new service called Screening Room which wipes out the window between theatrical and home video release so you can watch brand new releases the day they open in cinemas. The idea is you get a £100 box in your living room and you pay about £35 for a single screening of the movie, which is a lot if it's just you but a bargain if you have a family like *The Waltons*. Subscribers will also be offered two free tickets to see their purchased movie a second time on the big screen. Will it take off? Depends on how good or bad your cinema experiences have been lately. Speaking personally, it doesn't bother me one bit waiting four months for a new movie to turn up on Sky, and on balance I would probably prefer to watch an old movie anyway. I have a sneaking suspicion that many *Dark Side* readers feel exactly the same...

Allan Bryce



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THE DARKSIDE HORROR NEWS

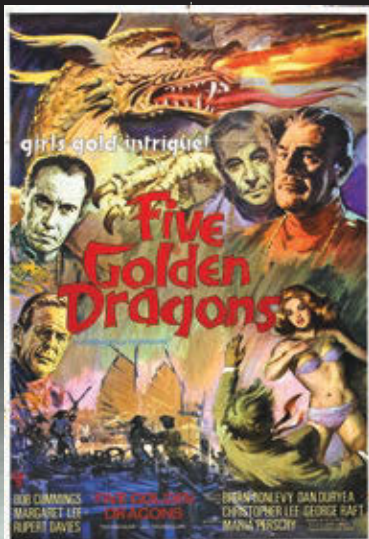
Editor Allan Bryce reports on the latest happenings in the world of movie horror...

We love a bit of Edgar Wallace action here, especially in high definition, so we were delighted to hear that Bill Lustig and his Blue Underground team are working on new HD restorations of two 60s Wallace movies: *Circus of Fear* and *Five Golden Dragons*, both produced by the legendary Harry Alan Towers and featuring Christopher Lee and Klaus Kinski.

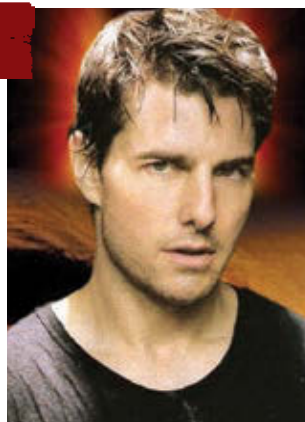
Circus was made in 1967 and has Lee as a mysterious lion tamer who wears a mask to hide his scarred face. Klaus Kinski's extended death scene is a highlight of this entertaining krimi, which opens with an audacious robbery sequence on London Bridge!

Dragons was made a year later and stars Robert Cummings in his last film role as a jet-setting American who visits Hong Kong and gets caught up with Mafia dealings and a sinister group called the *Five Golden Dragons*. - one of whom is Chris Lee. Great location work will make this a treat to watch in high def.

Blue Underground are also working on a new 2K restoration of Fulci's *Manhattan Baby* from the original negative. No release date yet, but Blue Underground have said that May 31st will be the day their Blu-ray of *Venom* slithers into stores. This guilty pleasure from 1982 has wild-eyed terrorist Klaus Kinski and his sozzled-looking accomplice Oliver Reed taking an ambassador's family hostage, unaware that there's a deadly black mambo in the siege house. This so-bad-it's-good thriller was started by Tobe Hooper and finished by Brit director Piers Haggard, who supplies a commentary on the disc.



Movie News



KONG RETURNS

March 10th 2017 sees the release of *Kong: Skull Island*, in which the legendary giant ape returns to wreak more special effects havoc.

Directed by Jordan Vogt-Roberts (*Kings of Summer*) from a script by John Gatins and Max Borenstein (*Godzilla*), it stars Tom Hiddleston as a guy who goes in search of his scientist brother who has been stranded on Skull Island while looking for a mythical serum that can cure all diseases and illnesses.

John Goodman is along for the journey and no doubt they will encounter prehistoric monsters and big hairy spiders as well as a big hairy ape.

Most *King Kong* movies have been set early in the early part of the 20th century, but early reports suggest this one is set in the 1970s and might cross over with the rebooted *Godzilla* series Michael Keaton and J.K. Simmons have left the film due to scheduling conflicts, but in addition to the two stars already named there are guaranteed roles for Brie Larson, Samuel L. Jackson, John C. Reilly, Jason Mitchell, Corey Hawkins, Toby Kebell, and Tom Wilkinson.

MONSTER CRUISE

As you probably all know by now, Tom Cruise is toplining the brand new 'reboot' of *The Mummy* franchise. Sofia Boutella (*Kingsman: The Secret Service*) is already on board to play the title character, and *New Girl/Jurassic World* star Jake Johnson appears as a military

man. Annabelle Wallis of *Peaky Blinders*, is set to play a scientist. Alex Kurtzman is directing the movie, which begins filming in April.

The idea is that this blockbuster will help launch Universal's new era of monster films, with other classic monsters like Frankenstein and Dracula making guest appearances in each other's films - all we need is a new Abbott and Costello to join in the fun. *The Mummy* will be followed in 2018 by a new version of *The Wolf Man*, written by Aaron Guzikowski (*Prisoners*) who has also just been hired to write the next *Friday the 13th* movie.

BRAD NEWS FOR ZOMBIES

The Mummy is scheduled for a June 9th, 2017, release, and so is *World War Z 2*, which will feature the return of Brad Pitt in the lead role but recently lost its director Juan Antonio Bayona. Marc Forster's 2013 release had lots of production problems and was expected to be a box office loser, but it turned out to be a massive box office hit. Bayona of *The Orphanage* fame was originally attached to direct the sequel but exited due to scheduling conflicts. Paramount Pictures announced the news saying, "Bayona is no longer able to make *World War Z 2* this year, and it is our ambition to do so. He is a wonderful director and we hope to work with him soon."

The new script for *World War Z 2* is being developed by Steven Knight and Dennis Kelly and a new director will be announced imminently. Is George Romero available?

DON'T MESS WITH THE PUB LANDLORD

25th of April is the release date for network's UK disc of *Revenge* (1971), a talky but tense British thriller starring James Booth as the owner of a small town pub whose young daughter is raped and murdered. He kidnaps the creepy little man (Kenneth Griffith) he suspects is responsible and holds him hostage in the pub's cellar while he tries to torture the truth out of him. There are plenty of twists and turns here, and some very good performances, notably from Booth and Griffith. Joan Collins also makes quite an impact as Booth's troubled wife.





UPCOMING ON BLU-RAY

Arrow Video continue to dominate the genre release schedule both in the UK and in the USA. At the end of May they will release Jack Hill's 1966 cult favourite *Blood Bath*, with William Campbell as a demented artist who believes that he becomes his evil ancestor, a 15th-century artist/vampire who cheats artistically by dipping his fetching female models in molten wax before painting them. There have been four different versions of this movie, which was also released as *Track of the Vampire*, *Operation Titan* and *Portrait In Terror*, and they will all be on this definitive disc set newly restored from the best materials available.

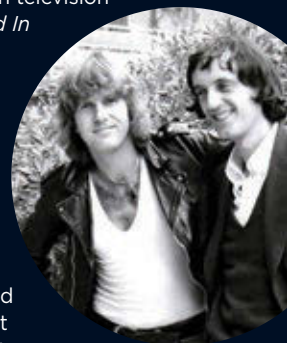
On May 24, Arrow plan to release a Blu-ray/DVD double called *Killer Dames: Two Gothic Chillers By Emilio P. Miraglia*, a Blu-ray/DVD double feature of two early 1970s giallos: *The Red Queen Kills Seven Times* and *The Night Evelyn Came Out Of The Grave*. Both are sexy and stylish, and a must for giallo collectors.



IN MEMORIAM

It seems we have had a lot of high profile celebrity deaths of late, and one of the most tragic was that of *American Horror Story: Freak Show* actor Ben Woolf, who died at age 34 on Monday 29th February. The actor died of a stroke at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center where he had been hospitalised since being struck by a car mirror while crossing a Hollywood street the previous Thursday.

Woolf, best known for playing Meep on *AHS*, was diagnosed with pituitary dwarfism and had previously starred in television movies such as *Haunting Charles Manson*, *Dead In Kansas* and *Unlucky Charms*.



PROG ROCK LEGEND - Equally tragic was the death by suicide of Keith Emerson, co-founder and keyboardist of progressive rock group Emerson, Lake and Palmer. Yorkshire-born Keith was one of the top keyboardists of the prog rock era and of course contributed a memorable Goblin-style score to Dario Argento's *Inferno*. The 71-year-old musician died of a self-inflicted gunshot wound to the head at his Santa Monica home. Inspired by Jimi Hendrix's theatrics with the electric guitar, he was famous for his showmanship and outlandish on-stage performance style. Before finding worldwide fame with ELP, Emerson was a member of The Nice, which formed in 1967 but disbanded three years later. In later life he pursued a solo career and remained active in the music business. Bandmate Carl Palmer said he was "deeply saddened" and paid tribute to his "brother-in-music" in a statement online.

"Keith was a gentle soul whose love for music and passion for his performance as a keyboard player will remain unmatched for many years to come," he said.



CARRIED OFF - We were also sad to learn of the death of Norman Hudis, the screenwriter of the first six *Carry On* films, who died in California recently at the age of 93. His widow, Rita, confirmed his death in a statement: "He died peacefully at home with myself and Stephen and Kevin, his two sons."

Hudis penned the script to *Carry On Sergeant* in 1958. He then wrote a further five films in the franchise before relocating to the USA where he also wrote for television series' *The Man From U.N.C.L.E.*, *Hawaii Five-O* and *The Wild, Wild West*.

And at least Norman lived to a ripe old age, and the same can be said of Sir Ken Adam, the James Bond production designer, who recently died aged 95 - isn't it uncanny how he looks like Norman?

Most famous for his work on the James Bond films of the 60s and 70s, Sir Ken also designed the amazing triangular Pentagon War Room in *Dr Strangelove* (the best movie-set ever built, according to Steven Spielberg) and the car in *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*.

He was born Klaus Adam in 1921 in Berlin, and Ken's Jewish family, who ran a sports store, fled the Nazis to England when he was in his teens. He began to study architecture, and later served in the RAF - one of the few members of the RAF with a German passport. After the war, he worked on *Around the World in 80 Days*, coming to the attention of producer Albert "Cubby" Broccoli who went on to hire him for *The Trials of Oscar Wilde* and, in 1962, Sir Ken's first Bond film, *Dr No*. His career lasted into his 70s, and he won two Oscars, in 1976 for his work on Stanley Kubrick's *Barry Lyndon*; and in 1995 for *The Madness of King George*. He was also Oscar-nominated for his work on *Around the World in 80 Days*, *The Spy Who Loved Me* and *Addams Family Values*. In 2003, he received a knighthood - the first for a film production designer. He is survived by his wife Maria Letizia, whom he married in 1952.



MEET CLIVER



The perennially bearded Al Cliver was a video nasty hero during his heyday - battling against the living dead and Lucio Fulci's notorious temper tantrums! Nowadays, however, he enjoys a much easier life in the Far East. Calum Waddell caught up with the accommodating icon for an exclusive chat!

You want to talk about B-movie acting legends? Well few come much more legendary than the great Al Cliver (real name: Pierluigi Conti). Perhaps most famous for being part of an ensemble that also included Tisa Farrow, Ian McCulloch and Richard Johnson in Lucio Fulci's masterpiece *Zombie Flesh-Eaters* (1979), Cliver left behind a storied and successful thespian career during the height of Rome-based shock and sleaze. Key titles on his CV include the exploitation classics *Waves of Lust* (1975), *Forever Emmanuelle* (1976) and *Black Emmanuelle, White Emmanuelle* (1976), Fernando Di Leo's blood-splashed thriller *Rulers of the City* (1976), Fulci's later splatter-shocker *The Beyond* (1981) and Joe D'Amato's awesome *Endgame* (1983). Now long retired from the grind of the grindhouse, Cliver underwent surgery for throat cancer almost a decade ago and today speaks with a welcoming gravelly rasp. *The Dark Side*, however, caught up with the great man in Bali, Indonesia - where the living legend owns an abode populated by several dogs, a swimming pool and some fabulous decor.

Cliver also assists in running a local resort hotel in Kuta that is geared towards many of the youngsters who flock to the island for the beer, babes and beaches. Your humble scribe, who is now based in Asia, was taking a trip around some of Indonesia when it was revealed by the ever-helpful Mike Baronas that Cliver was in Bali.

As such, ever-dedicated, yours truly took a detour to famous tourist trap in order to set up a meeting. Sharing some beers in the tropical weather, and discovering that Cliver has written his own autobiography (which is an eye-opening and involving read judging by the English language version that he offered for perusal), our conversation soon began - with the wonderful host, now aged 65, proving to be an initially reluctant but nonetheless insightful and frequently funny interviewee...

Obviously you are best known for *Zombie Flesh-Eaters* and I do want to speak about that, but let's go back to the beginning, because you had a very small part in Visconti's *The Damned* in 1969 - which is where your screen career really starts, right?

Let me explain - I was a young man. I started to act when I was sixteen. I did theatre and stuff and then I was cast in *The Damned*. Just in the background, really. But what an honour. After the war we made all of our amazing neorealism movies. These Italian films were made with passion. Not like what Hollywood was doing back then - we crafted our stories with feeling and with a great need to say something profound.

All of my favourite films come from neorealism and here I am on a set with Luchino Visconti. The great Visconti... Times were changing when I began with the Italian films. It was just after the Hercules movies and the great spaghetti westerns - now we made B-movie, the horror films, the erotic pictures... For whatever reason I began to be cast in these productions.

Your first leading role was for Ruggero Deodato in his movie *Waves of Lust*. What do you remember about this?

Ah, Ruggero - okay, so *Waves of Lust* was one of his first movies. It was with his wife at the time Silvia Dionisio...

Yeah, she was beautiful...

Sure, but we got along only okay. I mean, it was fine making that movie but Silvia was a bit of a snob. Perhaps she thought she was better than the film. I don't know. After she and Ruggero broke up and she left the acting community she married a doctor and now she will not speak about her past to anyone. I think she disowns these movies.

Did you have a good rapport with Deodato?

I did - so much so that he called me back for his next film - the police movie...

Live Like a Cop, Die Like a Man...

Okay, I could not tell you the title but I did not accept it. He hung up and he would never speak to me again after that. No phone calls or anything. Thirty years later I met him because we were both flying to America for a convention. I knew he would be there but we saw each other at the airport first. I went over and said hello. I said, 'Ruggero, I cannot believe it has been more than thirty years' and he said, 'You refused my movie. How could you?' I said, 'Ruggero, I was drunk when you phoned me about it and I can barely even remember why I said no, but I am sorry'. He still seemed angry about this, I think he really took it to heart.

How did you rate Deodato as a filmmaker?

I think he was a good filmmaker. But everyone back then was good. We had the greatest film industry in the world.

Very true. You stuck with lower budgeted sexploitation films after *Waves of Lust* - going on to star in *Forever Emmanuelle* with Annie Belle. I read that you guys were married, is this true?

No, no, no - I never married Annie Belle! I only got married when I was 53 (laughs). We were boyfriend and girlfriend for many years.

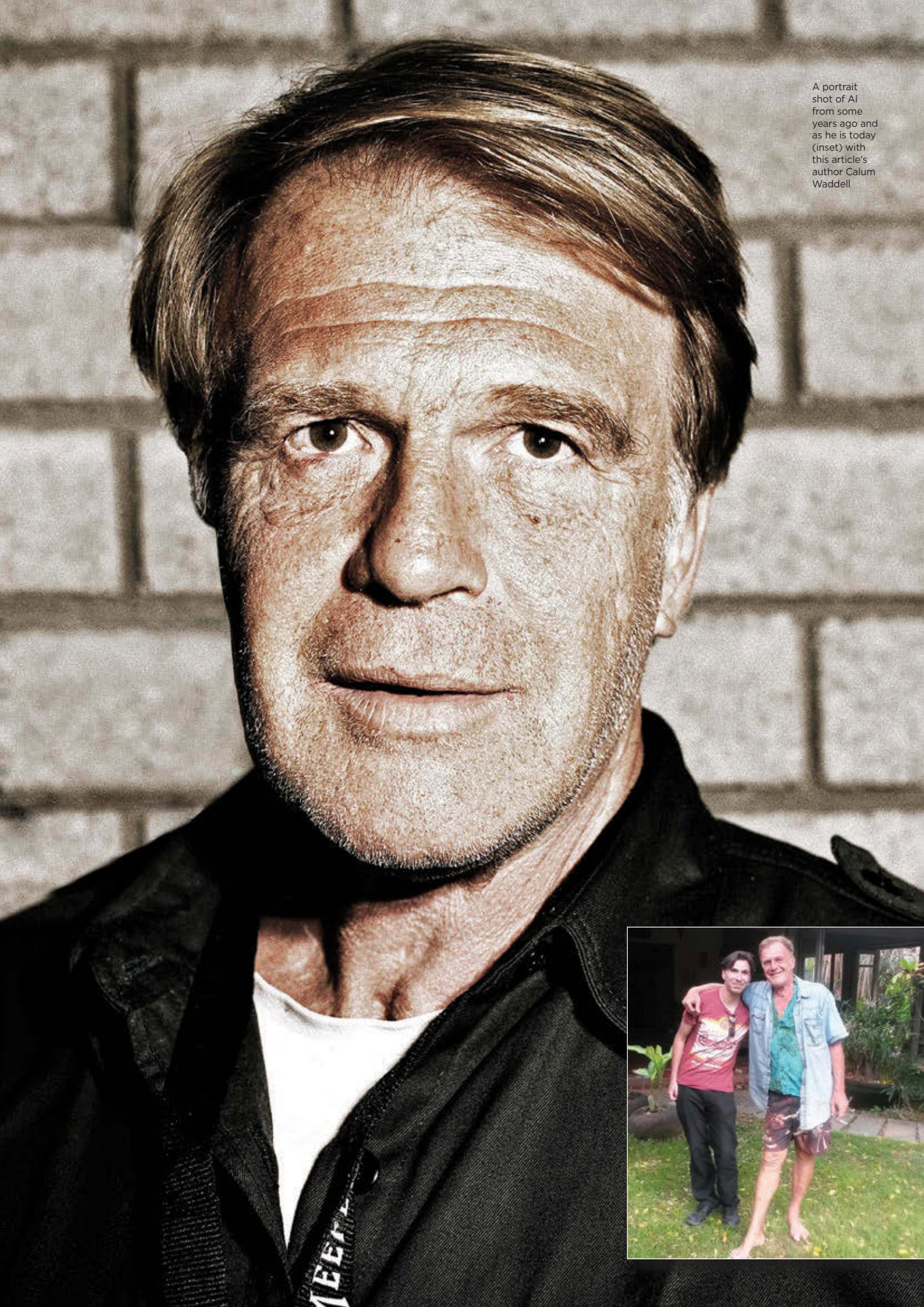
You did a few films with Annie Belle - including the famous *Black Emmanuelle, White Emmanuelle*. These movies required a lot of nudity, including from yourself, did you have any hesitation?

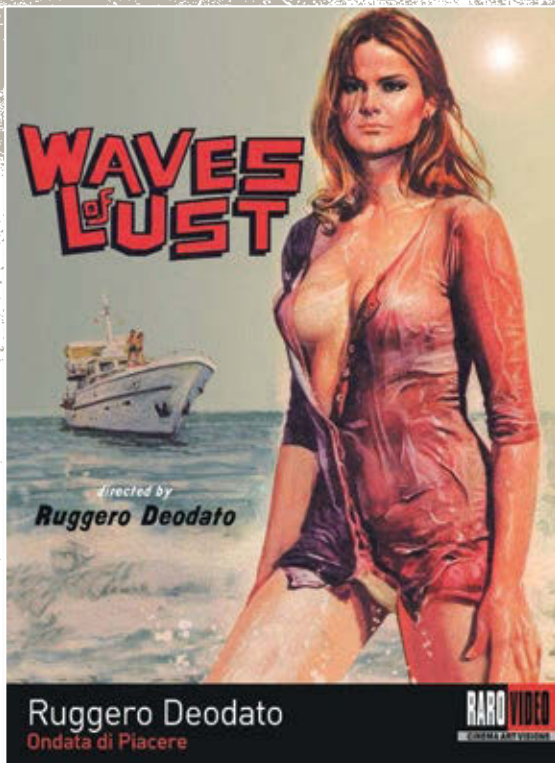
Not at all, we were the product of 1968, you understand?

Sure, the French student riots, the Prague Spring...

You are a smart guy, well-read... You know, then, that we were about free love, free talk, free everything. So to be naked back then - it was a statement. We were not bothered. You cannot do that at my age, of course, but when you are young, sure... (laughs). But it was wonderful at that time. The movies were wonderful, liberating...

A portrait
shot of Al
from some
years ago and
as he is today
(inset) with
this article's
author Calum
Waddell





just money and girls and adventure. Who wouldn't want that life? But at a certain moment I knew I needed to go to school. I needed to start a new chapter in my life. Being an actor was never going to last...

When you did *Forever Emmanuelle* you went to the Philippines. At the time it was ruled by the dictator Ferdinand Marcos. Any interesting memories?

The Philippines was amazing. It was quiet. It was safe. Very safe for foreigners. When you have a dictator they leave the foreigners alone. In Indonesia, under Suharto, it was fine - the police would not bother you. Now the police do not have a problem bothering the tourists in Bali. So I felt very safe in the Philippines - but maybe not so good for the local people.

Your next film was for Fernando Di Leo, *Rulers of the City*, with Jack Palance...

Listen, I rarely do interviews. I do not mind with you - but it is rare. But when someone told me they were doing a documentary on the great Fernando Di Leo I said okay, sure. Do you know why? It was because he was a genius. I tell people the same thing about him: he was a very nice man, an amazing filmmaker, one of the best. *Rulers of the City* was one of the most professional and exciting films I had the pleasure to make. I adored Fernando Di Leo. He worked wonders with very little money.

Inevitably, we need to talk a little about *Zombie Flesh-Eaters*. What attracted to you to the film?

I had never been to Santa Domingo. And this was a trip to Santa Domingo (laughs).

Good point. How did you rate Lucio Fulci?

As a person he was impossible. Always angry, always frustrated. He would say 'Michelangelo would use marble. With marble you can make a masterpiece. Me? I get a lousy piece of cement and they expect a masterpiece.' He expected nothing from *Zombie*. Nothing at all. He did not want to be there. He was a hired hand on a movie he did not see any potential in. However, he called me for so many movies. Even his later



movies, he called me to help out - he asked me to come and work with him. He would be abusive, unpleasant, shout at everyone... yet he still gave me a phone call whenever he needed something. I don't know why - I guess he knew I could take the worst of him.

He was bad with women, right?

He was the worst with actresses. He would make them cry. They would burst into tears. I have never seen a man treat women like that to this day. Except Tisa Farrow. For whatever reason he loved Tisa Farrow. I do not know if it is because she had a famous sister because, honestly, she was not an actress...

She has vanished now too!

She has disappeared! She became a taxi driver and then a nurse I think... She was like me. She was not really any kind of performer. You know, when my wife first came to my house she said she could not believe I was ever an actor. She said, 'An actor has to have pictures of himself

This page:
Al's first leading role was for Ruggero Deodato in his erotic thriller movie, *Waves of Lust*. His girlfriend Annie Belle starred opposite him in *Black Emmanuelle*, *White Emmanuelle*

Then the world became so much more conservative. But Annie was my girlfriend and times were different and we loved doing these movies together...

Yeah, there was this strange turn towards the end of the seventies when the Andrea Dworkin school of thought resulted in this weird anti-feminism - and I would honestly call it that - where suddenly women were being attacked for making decisions of their own and made to feel as if sex was dirty, sexual expression was dirty...

So women started to think it was wrong to be seen nude. Suddenly it all changed. And the actresses, great people like Laura Gemser, they got viewed badly - which was awful. So they wanted to disappear...

You worked with Laura Gemser on *Black Emmanuelle*, *White Emmanuelle* - I would love to know more...

Laura Gemser was beautiful on the inside and the outside. Now she does not want to talk about her acting life. She changed her life many years ago - that was probably when we fell out of touch too. She got married, retired, she lives somewhere in Italy but I do not know where. I think she was a wonderful woman, very nice, very easygoing...

And *Black Emmanuelle*, *White Emmanuelle* took you back to Egypt, your birthplace, and across Europe. In fact, you worked in some amazing locations with these films. As someone now based in Bali - and who once lived in Sri Lanka - obviously world travel was a perk...

Very much - and I was just a young guy. If I got offered a job, most of the time I took it. If I got hired to work on a movie it meant I got to travel and to meet women (laughs). For me, making movies was



with a director and other stars. You have nothing. Not one fucking photo anywhere.' You see, I am a primitive man. I live without materialism. To me, other things are important. I did not even have an answer machine when I retired from all of this. I was like a caveman. My wife, she had to teach me how to use the internet and surf the web. She started to use the internet, eBay and stuff, to find my old film posters. Now I have a few things. Not many things but just a few. She bought all kinds of stuff for me. Otherwise I just left all of this behind...

Another person to disappear after the success of *Zombie Flesh-Eaters* is Aurette Gay...

And no wonder! He abused her so bad - screamed at her, hurled swear words at her, disparaged her... it was horrifying...

Why was it so bad?

I am not even sure. He just took a real dislike to her. He called her Kaka Gay - do you know this story?

My good friend John Martin interviewed Lucio Fulci shortly before he died and Fulci told him it was because she could 'number two' through her swim suit. Is that correct?

Not quite. I doubt even Fulci would own up to this. But she was terrified of deep water and he made her dive. To get right down to the bottom. And she was shaking but he screamed at her so bad and made her stay under. She was so frightened she... well let's just say we saw a piece of shit floating up in the water. That was what his temperament had accomplished. So instead of apologising he called her Kaka Gay for the rest of the shoot...

Were you there when they shot the sequence with the shark?

No, I was not there when they did the scene with the shark. When I saw it many years later I thought 'wow'. You know, Fulci was a huge genius - he accomplished great things with his work. But like I said he did not believe in that movie. He did not think it was going to go anywhere.

When did you see *Zombie Flesh-Eaters* for the first time?

Believe it or not, I only saw *Zombie* after 30 years. I had no idea it had been such a big film.

What did you think?

I remember my first thought was that Aurette had a nice arse (laughs). I was thinking to myself, 'Why did I never notice this on the set?'

How did you get along with your other co-stars?

With Richard Johnson - he was a great man, he commanded respect from Lucio and he got it. I was so sad to hear he had died. Ian was tight with money. You Scottish are all tight...

Actually many Scottish are socialists or Marxists, myself included...

But Ian is so tight! I still see him at conventions. He saves every penny. Why is he different?

He is that rare entity - a Scottish conservative...

I see. You know, it is interesting to meet them all again now. I was so sad to hear of Richard passing away. It is crazy though - all of us brought together for conventions to celebrate this movie that not one of us thought was ever going to be seen by anybody. I could not believe there were people who would pay for a picture with me. I did not even want to go to this sort of thing. I thought, 'no one will remember me'. But my wife, she is an American - she said, 'are you crazy? You can fly to America fully paid and earn a little money on the side, you must!' I arrived and there were fifty people lined up to meet me. That was just in the morning. Some woman came up to me and even pinched my bottom (laughs). A young guy, he must just have been in his early twenties, he was shaking when he came up to us. This was his favourite film!

You are speaking English in *Zombie Flesh-Eaters*, right?

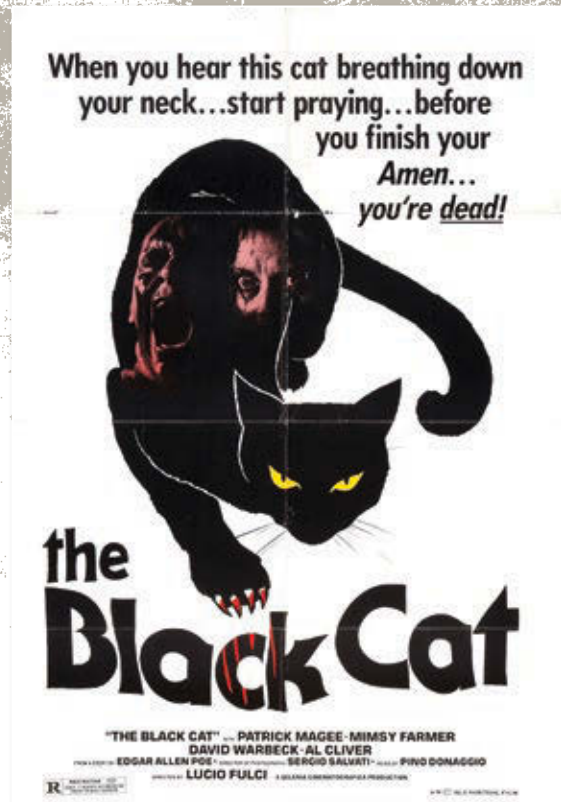
Yeah, I would speak English. But they filmed us with no sound. I was dubbed in all of my movies.

Usually by the late Nick Alexander. So you at least sound the same in each movie! Did you ever meet Nick?

Never. And I owe him my voice!

You kept working with Lucio Fulci after *Zombie Flesh-Eaters*. For instance you made *The Black Cat* in England...

Above:
All aboard Al's boat for Matul. Tise Farrow, Aurette Gay and Ian McCulloch test their sea legs in *Zombie Flesh Eaters*.
Left: A poster for *Rulers of the City*



This page:
Al appeared in Lucio Fulci's *Black Cat*, with the late David Warbeck (pictured) and in Jess Franco's typically cheap and cheerful *Devil Hunter*. Al found Jess "an amazing person."

With David Warbeck... another loss, he died young. Fulci liked him. I don't think anyone even saw that film. I cannot even tell you if it got a release in Italy.

And then you had a small role in *The Beyond*. Can you clear up a long-standing rumour that Fulci just paid local alcoholics and homeless people to star as the zombies in that movie?

No that is crazy. I was there. They paid them. It was not homeless people. It was all union crew. Most of them were local stunt people. Ottaviano Dell'Acqua and his family were on *The Beyond* too...

Are you sure he was not just on *Zombie Flesh-Eaters*?

I am sure he was on both films. He was definitely on *Zombie Flesh-Eaters* and, of course, he is known for the maggots coming out of his eyes. But even if they had to find fifty people to appear as zombies they would get crew - stuntmen, people from the local industry. It was definitely a professional cast and crew on *The Beyond* - even the extras.

Your profile was large enough at this point for you to be exported to Spain to make 1980's twosome of *White Cannibal Queen* and *Devil Hunter* for Jess Franco. How did that deal happen?

At a certain moment in Italy the productions were dependent on outside investment. This Italian producer, he made a deal with Jess Franco - a director in Spain. He was an amazing person...

How did you rate Franco as a filmmaker?

Uh... I can't say he was great. But he could do a movie with £25. So maybe he was some sort of genius. He had a huge brain. Very accurate - very aware of what he wanted. This producer called me and he said, 'Pierluigi, you go to Spain and



you will represent the Italian filmmaking world'. It was just me from Italy. I went there and I got well paid to do these movies. I made two movies...

You were the Indiana Jones role in *Devil Hunter*...

Both of these films faded into one another. I will tell you why - Franco was doing both of them at the same time. I would work on one film in the morning and the other in the afternoon. He did them both in just two weeks. It was incredible. I have still never seen these movies.

Let's talk about Joe D'Amato AKA Aristide Massaccesi - you worked with him on *2020 Freedom Fighters* in 1982...

Ah, Massaccesi - he was my best friend. My best friend in this industry. We were a little family. He kept all of his friends close to him - George Eastman, Laura Gemser...

Right, Laura Gemser was in many of his movies...

She was a great friend of Massaccesi. He made her feel very comfortable - this is why she did so many softcore films with him. She had been a good friend of his family. And when Laura did not want to be a sex symbol anymore Massaccesi began to use her as a costume designer. This was after she drifted away from acting - he kept her employed behind the scenes. We were such a small a family, all of us.

My favourite of your films with Massaccesi is 1983's futuristic actioner *Endgame*...

That is my favourite of all my films. A great poster too - they put me on there, very large, as if I am a big star (laughs). *Endgame* was shot around Rome - we never filmed that in a studio.

And it looks pretty good...

Massaccesi just found ruined old buildings around the city. He shot it out on the streets - neorealism style. Massaccesi could make a movie with \$500 - more than Franco, sure, but still not much. He was a very underrated talent and a great, gentle man to work for.

Are you ever angry you don't get royalties from these old movies? That there was no Italian equivalent of the American SAG?

No, no, no - I do get royalties but it is nothing. Like \$200 every year or something. Remember that these were still predominantly union films.

You faded from acting in the late 1980s, working for Lucio Fulci in some of his poorest efforts - 1988's *Touch of Death*, 1989's *House of Clocks* and 1990's *Demonia*...

With these movies Fulci had nothing. All the Italian film industry went bankrupt. There is nothing left now. Films have changed - once if you wanted extras you hired them. Even Fulci did this - he had his zombie extras. Now you use a computer.

In those later days, just before he died, Fulci was trying to hang on and he knew he could rely on me. But he died penniless. Same as Massaccesi - he also died without any money. Di Leo had saved a little. Just a little. Only Ruggero has money - but it is family money. It's true to say that none of these directors got rich from those great times in our industry.

So, finally, do you think you will ever act again?

I am afraid to act again. I just don't think that I remember how to (laughs). **DS**

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Are you a new convert to *The Dark Side*? Have you missed out on some past editions of our great magazine? If so, the good news is that we have a number of *Dark Side* back issues available to UK readers for purchase via PayPal, cheque or Postal Order at just £5 each including postage. Please note that this offer is also open to readers in Europe at £7.00 including postage, and in the USA, Canada and the rest of the world at £8.50 each, again with postage included.

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POST MORTEM

If you have something you want to get off your chest, don't be afraid to scream at us about it! Send your bouquets or brickbats to Post Mortem, The Dark Side, 29 Cheyham Way, South Cheam, Surrey SM2 7HX. Or e-mail us at: Allan@thedarksidemagazine.com

Dear Allan,

Over the decades that I have been shuffling around on this mortal coil, I have lost count of the number of movies - good, bad, awful and dire - I have sat through, both at the cinema and at home on TV.

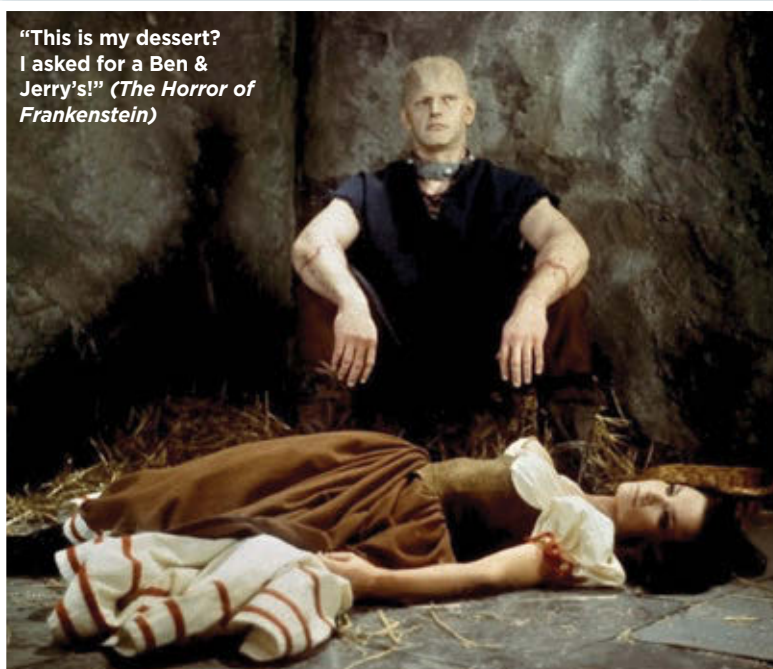
It is with anticipation that I always keep an eye out in your magazine (and others, it has to be said!) for re-issues of movies, not necessarily "classic," but ones that have made an impression on me from time to time. And yet there are two which, to the best of my knowledge, are not yet available and they are as follows:

1: The 1986 film *Bullies*, with relatively unknown actors, which, to my mind, made it even more watchable. The only actress I recognised was Olivia d'Abo - possibly daughter of Mike d'Abo, singer with latter day version of the band Manfred Mann? Very good film, with some extremely nasty villains. Basic plot, family move to small town to take over local business. Said small town 'run' by dysfunctional family of hillbilly types who sold land for development and made pile of cash. The new family have a run-in, things escalate as they do, and mayhem ensues. It also stars Jonathan Crombie, Stephen B. Hunter and Janet-Laine Green. I can only find a cost-prohibitive region 1 via Amazon, but do have a DVD of it which is a direct transfer to disc from VHS. It's watchable and fairly good quality, all things considered. Would like to see a decent UK copy.

2: The 1987 film *Hunter's Blood*, to my mind, one of the best of its genre. A group of city dwellers join a guide for some hunting and fall foul of the, again, local hillbilly rednecks. Some quite disturbing scenes - a skinned cop/park ranger left hanging in a tree, and if memory serves, the first ever scene depicting what really happens with a shotgun blast to the head - like a bloody hollowed-out football. However, gore aside, the tension is racked up very well and has some reasonably well known names in the cast: Clu Gulager, Sam Bottoms, Joey Travolta and that old stalwart of B movies, Billy Drago!

Again, I have a DVD disc from a reasonably good VHS transfer, presented as an 'Unreleased Collectors Edition DVD-R' with a

"This is my dessert?
I asked for a Ben &
Jerry's!" (*The Horror of
Frankenstein*)



note on the sleeve that reads, in part: "Should this film be released on DVD format, please buy an original release and destroy this presentation." If it ever IS released, I happily would. I did, in fact, email Arrow some time ago asking if they had any plans to obtain the rights and release this, but never heard back.

So, there you have it, my recommendations for two films that I believe should be re-released on DVD/Blu-ray, and I'm getting on in years now, so it would be nice.

Finally, for all you trivia-keen film buffs out there, in Ken Russell's film *Altered States*, in the scene where Dr Jessup (William Hurt) is meeting his wife, (Blair Brown) at the airport, over the tannoy an announcer can be heard paging a 'Daniel Craig'. And the 'inferno' sequences in the film are lifted from the 1935 film *Dante's Inferno*, starring Spencer Tracy (took me years to track that down, as no credit is given at the end of the film). Thanks again for your time and patience in reading all this guff!

Mike Bridgeman, by email

We always love a bit of trivia, Mike. I still have vivid memories of the shotgun-blasted head in *Hunter's Blood*, not the least because the jaw was still moving back and forth as the camera tracked over it - a grandly gruesome animatronic effect. You can watch the movie on YouTube but it remains unattainable in a decent quality DVD, as does *Bullies*, I am

afraid. Oh, and yes, that Pretty Flamingo Olivia d'Abo is indeed Manfred Mann's daughter.

Hi Allan,

I've been a subscriber since issue 50 (and own all but a handful of the magazines before that), so decided it was about time I wrote in again. Must say the magazine is going from strength to strength and I prefer the more recent issues (Meir Zarchi, Sergio Martino, Wes Craven and Christopher Lee tributes amongst others) as I'm not a huge fan of *Godzilla*, *Doctor Who* and *King Kong* although I'm sure I'm in a minority, as a lot of people probably buy it from the shelf because of the huge hairy ape on the cover (and I don't mean Rick Melton).

Anyway, on with the requests/questions. How about an interview/article on the gorgeous Jennifer Connelly based on her work with Argento on *Phenomena*? Another former favourite of mine who is well deserving of a few pages is Deborah Foreman who starred in about half a dozen horror films including *April Fools Day* and *Sundown: The Vampire in Retreat* (both hugely underrated) as well as a favourite of mine *Waxworks* (I know, not to everyone's tastes). Finally, on the horror actress front, an article (with lots of pictures) on Melissa George (*Paradise Lost*, *Triangle*, *30 Days of Night*, etc...) would be very welcome.

Question time. Are there any plans to release a Blu-ray of *Waxwork* (possibly with *Waxwork 2* for completeness)? Has *Absurd* been released on DVD and if so how cut is it?

Finally I remember a film/TV show I watched as a teenager where a man was driving away from some old house on a road at night and every car that went past him on the other side of the road was being driven by him (I think or at least the same person) and eventually he swerved off the road and crashed - any clue what it's from?

Anyway, that's me done, keep going strong with the magazine and it's about time you thought about releasing DVDs again as yours always included very good prints and excellent extras.

Davy Wetton, by email

We're always up for interviews with horror heroines, Davy, so we will keep your suggestions in mind. No news of a *Waxworks* Blu yet, but you will hear about it here if it happens. *Absurd* is available uncut on an Austrian DVD. Not sure what the mystery show is you are looking for but it does sound like *The Hitch-Hiker* episode of *The Twilight Zone* where haunted heroine Inger Stevens keeps passing the same man on the road. I am sure that one of our readers will have a better idea on this one.

Dear Allan,

I'm a regular reader and subscriber of your publication and just wanted to say that your magazine is brilliant. The quality of writing, images and the range you cover is commendable. Every issue I'm sent rushing online to see if I can purchase any of the gems you write about.

I hate to mention rival critics but I'm a huge fan of the cult movie series by Danny Peary, as I'm sure you all are, and like me you probably lament the demise of the midnight movie scene. Those really were the days, before cheap videos, where us freaks would congregate to watch an often crap but enjoyable movie - convinced we were the 'chosen ones' who were able to see the barely evident qualities of our favourite films.

Most of the 200 films he wrote about are either available, very cheaply online, or show on Youtube, daily motion etc. But online the quality is often poor and I've tried and failed to find a decent copy of *The Great Texas Dynamite Chase*. Are you able to point me in the right direction to find a decent copy for a region 2 DVD player? Hope to long remain a reader of *The Dark Side*!

Steven Johnston, by email

I had the Danny Peary book too, Steve, and it was a great read. As for *The Great Texas Dynamite Chase*, it's a great film, but sadly not available on Region 2 and expensive on Region 1.

Hello again Allan,

Have just received the new edition of *Dark Side* No 173 and was delighted to see my letter printed in full.

This is just a quick follow up to address something you said in your reply about me about seeing the original *House on Haunted Hill* in Emergo in the cinema back in 1960.

You thought that it must have been in

America because it was not released in Emergo in England. Well it was, because I saw it at The Kings Cinema in Bristol which was at that time a first run ABC Cinema. I don't think the smaller re-run cinemas ever showed it that way though.

I do know that *The Tingler* was NOT shown in Percepto though as it didn't get a full first run release (not in Bristol anyway) as I saw that at the Embassy Cinema Bristol which was an independent cinema that picked up the films that ABC and Rank ignored.

I remember going to The Embassy to watch *Plan 9 from Outer Space*, which believe it or not carried an 'X' Cert back in the day and didn't have the reputation of being the worst film ever made then. I do remember thinking it wasn't too good a film though.

Referring back to my previous letter and the subject of Region Free DVD/Blu-ray. Are you and your readers aware that all American DVD/Blu Ray released through Warner Bros are Region Free and will play on all UK players? So that includes the recent 4 Blu Ray Hammer Films, *Dracula*



Has Risen from the Grave, *Taste the Blood of Dracula*, *Frankenstein Must Be Destroyed* and *The Mummy*. These are bare bones releases but worth having if you are a Hammer fan, although the R2 Blu-ray of *The Mummy* is a better purchase if only for 2 different ratio versions and good extras. Sorry if I've rambled on again, but its a subject I love, and once you get me started...

John Sheppard, by email

Really envious now, John, I'm thinking of stringing a skeleton up in my home cinema for my next screening of *Haunted Hill* on Blu, or maybe wire the seats up to the mains for *The Tingler*? Thanks for the tip on the US Warner releases. I saw *Plan Nine* in cinemas with an 'X' too, seems so strange that such an inept and unintentionally funny movie would be deemed damaging to the young.

Dear Allan,

The Dark Side has to be one of my favourite magazines. I always look forward to seeing a new copy on the shelf of my local WH Smiths and find the content consistently entertaining. Your very impressive knowledge of the genre has prompted me to write to you.

I have a vivid memory of a two part television drama from the late seventies or very early eighties. It was around the same time as *The Nightmare Man*. I think it was a BBC production.

As far as I can remember, the plot revolved around a disgraced secret service agent trying to solve a series of grisly murders. The setting was rural and most of it took place at night. I remember one victim's head being left on a silver platter in a pool of congealing blood. The hero was held responsible, incarcerated and suffered a beating at the hands of the local police force.

I saw the first part but was unable to see the second and therefore never discovered who the murderer was. I do remember quizzing one of my friends at the time who

said that the killer used tunnels to move around. Just recently I began to think of it again but I have been unable to find out what it was called or who starred in it. It left such an impression that I would like to know more about it even if the show might not now possess as much potency as it did back then.

The article *'the House of Fear* by MJ Simpson was absolutely wonderful by the way.

James Anderson, by email

You've foxed me with your question, James. It doesn't ring a bell with me, but maybe one of our readers can help? I loved MJ's feature too, one of the best we have published!

Dear Dark Side,

I am very much enjoying *Dark Side* 172 - great articles on *I Spit On Your Grave*, *Monster Memories*, Elizabeth

Bathory and so much more. I particularly enjoyed Richard Holliss's piece on collecting Super-8mm films.

I got the bug around 1964-65 when my dad used to bring home Harrison Marks films and treated me to viewings - as a schoolboy I was MUCH impressed, my favourite 'star' was (and is) Pamela Green, familiar to DS readers from *Peeping Tom*.

I still have two projectors and three movie cameras plus a giant screen and a large collection of Super-8mm films (and I attach scans from a few covers). I sold a few films years ago but I have never been able to find a proper marketplace for them, nor any information on prices. I will definitely be checking out the websites Richard mentioned!

Les Chester, by email.



"I'm sure I'm in a minority, as a lot of people probably buy it from the shelf because of the huge hairy ape on the cover (and I don't mean Rick Melton)"

Ah, those old Harrison Marks films, they were pretty hot in their time, and Pamela Green encouraged many cold showers in my younger days. She wasn't a bad little actress either, as *Peeping Tom* proved. I look back on my 8mm days with great fondness and I think it is great that there are still collectors out there.

Dear Dark Side,

I started picking up your fantastic magazine not too long ago, issue 161 to be precise. I was looking for a movie magazine that matched my acquired taste of horror films, something that the mainstream mags just couldn't provide. But I'm glad to say that yours does so - by the bucket-load. As well as an entertaining read, for me (at the meagre age of 21), *The Dark Side* is an education in horror. While in my own group of friends, I may be the 'film guy', compared with you and many of your readers, I have a lot of catching up to do. So I would just like to thank you all at *The Dark Side* for providing me with such a great source to discover and learn about all these films, good and bad, serious and silly, horrible and horrifying.

I don't have any questions to ask, but after my thanks I'd just like to share one of my most impactful memories of horror films, one that will be forever burned into my brain. Not surprisingly, it came from my childhood.

I was about 5-years-old, sitting on the sofa on a Friday night after watching *The Simpsons* and *Robot Wars*, two of my favourite programmes. My parents were flicking through the channels (all 5 of them!) until they stopped on something and my dad said, "It's the moors... Keep off the moors!"

Of course it was *An American Werewolf in London* and luckily it was near the start, while the two Americans are still in the good ol' Slaughtered Lamb. Now, being as I was only 5, most 'good' parents would have turned the channel over straight away, but not my parents. They knew I liked films, after all I had taped *Star Wars*,

Indiana Jones

and some 007 films off the telly already. So instead they just warned me that this was a scary film and kept watching.

I have to say it completely terrified me. But I loved it. It was different from other films, the emotions I felt watching it were so much stronger and more kinetic. That signature werewolf howl still gives me shivers to this day, and the whole sequence in the underground station fills me with dread (in a good way).

Of course there was a lot I didn't understand about it on that first viewing, in fact, I might not have even made it to the end, I can't remember. But on repeated viewings as I got older, the comedy of the film really shone through amongst other things, and to this day it remains my favourite horror film of all time. It's also the first one I can remember. Thanks again *Dark Side*, and stay classy.

Oliver Woodings, Stoke-on-Trent

Thanks for sharing some lovely memories there, Oliver. I'm so glad you enjoy what we are doing with *The Dark Side*, and taking our readers back to what they loved about horror films in the first place is a big part of that.

Dear Allan,

I'm writing to you from the land down under. First of all I'm a huge fan of your magazine and I was especially delighted to read the interview that John Martin did with Marc Morris and Jake West as I have recently finished watching both of the Video Nasties documentaries.

As an Australian horror

fan I had heard of Video Nasties but had little understanding of what they were. After watching the documentaries I have now gained some great insights into the subject.

I'm sorry to learn of the hardships you guys went through at the time, just to have the free right to be able to watch a movie genre we love. To me it sounded like your government wanted to sweep mental health issues under the carpet and just use movies as an excuse for troublesome behavior. After all, you can't tell me that Jack The Ripper, who terrorised London in 1888, watched a Video Nasty and decided... "You know what? I think I might go and rip people apart now!"

For me it begs the question, where does the responsibility lie? With the producer, parents or the viewer?

Most people can sit through a movie and know it's just a movie and not a realistic depiction of the events, so I find it unbelievable that many of the decisions that were made regarding the horror genre at the time made no sense whatsoever.

I would like to thank you for your great magazine and a special thank you to the guys behind the Nucleus Films and their participants for creating such a great documentary, as it was one of the most eye opening experiences I have had in some time.
Matt Nicol, by email

Thanks Matt, I have passed your comments on to Marc and Jake and am sure they will be pleased. It was indeed a crazy time, but we are well and truly over it now and some of the films on the nasties list have even been reclassified 15!



"Marry me, or I'll electrocute you."
(*Theatre of Blood*)



"I would just like to thank you all at *The Dark Side* for providing me with such a great source to discover and learn about all these films, good and bad, serious and silly, horrible and horrifying."

FrightFest positions itself as The Dark Heart Of Cinema, and it has certainly pumped much miscreant quiddity into the UK horror scene.

Formed in 2000 by journalist Alan Jones, distributor Ian Rattray and film producer Paul McEvoy, they were later joined by PR supremo Greg Day to form a quaking quadrilogy!

There have been deluded forays into the risible and downright noxious whilst plundering the globe for weird wonders, but FrightFest has been unstoppable in its expansion since inception. Venues outgrown, a smaller curation now terrorises the Glasgow Film Festival every February, and there are an increasing number of themed special events such as 2005's *The League Of Gentleman Day*, which premiered both the franchised movie and Rob Zombie's equally insane *The Devil's Rejects*.

Their latest venture is *FrightFest Presents*, a selection of titles from the festival released on VoD in partnership with Icon Films, to allow the twisted tastes of Jones and McEvoy to seep into your living room.

The first six boast a wide range of sub-genre: *Some Kind Of Hate* is a brutal parable about the consequences of being bullied and *Afterdeath* a disquieting chamber piece based on Jean-Paul Sartre's tenet that 'Hell is other people', whilst *Estranged* offers oblique chills in its gradual unravelling of family secrets.

Lightening the mood is the extraterrestrial granular attack of Isaac Gabaeff's *The Sand* and *Night Of The Living Deb*, an oddly charming undead apocalypse movie with added (love) bite.

Topping them all off is Steve Oram's bizarre primordial sitcom *Aaaaaah!*, where the characters eschew kitchen-sink dialogue for anthropoid grunts and shrieks.

Estranged director Adam Levins predicts that FrightFest Presents will become akin to the "Criterion Collection of horror." Yet it is early days. *The Dark Side* sat down with Alan and Paul to find out just what makes that dark heart tick.

Why have you decided to move into distribution now?

PM: We've dealt with Icon for many years, both from a business perspective and a friendship one. They've always been supportive of FrightFest and the various avenues we've explored, so we felt that they would be the perfect people to enter into a venture with. I mean, they've done so many great genre pictures, just in the last couple of years: *It Follows*, *The Babadook*, *Cold In July*.

AJ: We needed to understand the brand. The festival's all well and good, but we're in a really unique position: we see films often eighteen months before anybody else, so Icon came to us and said, "You can divine what's coming down the pike and see trends quicker than we can." A company like Icon goes to the film markets and buys big budget movies like *The Guest*, but they don't have the experience to know what the niche films are. We notice that because in FrightFest, whether the budget is small, large or micro, if it's good, with lots of imagination and scares, we will show it. A major distribution company can't do that. We have tried this before, with a couple of other companies, but it's never worked out as well as this because they never got what FrightFest really was. Icon have even said to us, "We don't quite understand why you like this, but we'll go with you because we know you've got a more direct connection to the fanbase than we have."

The films you alluded to releasing before, was *Shadow* one of them from a few years ago?

AJ: *Shadow* did come out, didn't it? God, it shows how I've drawn a veil over that whole thing. We had a deal with the French company Wild Bunch, but the trouble with them was they said, "We want your sensibility", but every time we suggested a film, it would go to head office and they'd come back and say, "Oh, we don't like this." But that's not the point, you didn't ask us for that. You asked us for our opinion on a movie we thought would do well in Britain, not France.

A FrightFest Presents title that showcases a unique, and peculiarly British, sensibility is *Aaaaaah!* How did that come to be chosen?

PM: We had a pre-existing relationship with Steve Oram since *Sightseers*, and when he had finished the film, he called me up and said, "Would you like to take a look?" I didn't know a great deal about it other than that he'd shown a clip at the Duke Mitchell film party from the previous year. I was sitting next to him on the front row and he screened thirty seconds and I was like, "What the fuck was that?" But when he called me, I agreed, but was quite direct that if I didn't like it I'd tell him. So he came round with a DVD, we had a few beers, and I got him to introduce it to me as if I was the world premiere audience. I was blown away. An extraordinary work. It crosses all the parameters and borders of what we do at the festival: it's got comedy, pathos, horror, violence. Utterly uncategorisable.

AJ: Luckily, Icon saw that quality too. It's a movie they would never have thought of before, but we made them see the commercial value in it. Those sort of films are going to come along rarely, but we were very lucky that Steve saw what we could do with it and knew the audience he wanted to appeal to. As a result of that, I think we got one of the best releases of the year.

Did you still have challenges selling it to an audience though, one that might look at the premise on paper and get suspicious that this doesn't look much like a 'FrightFest' film?

PM: I was involved with a limited theatrical release that we did 'gorilla'-style, if you will, hosting a bunch of screenings country-wide and billing them as midnight movie attractions. That certainly provided an additional means for us to recommend the film.

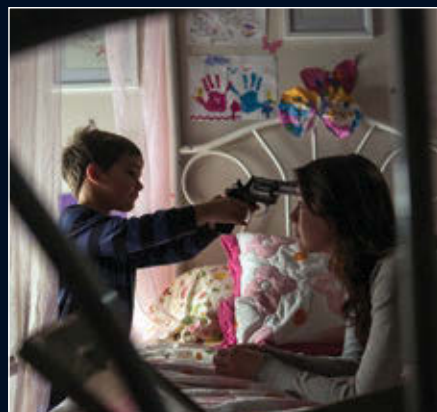
AJ: Let's be honest, it's not a film for everybody: there's as many that hate it as love it. But those who love it really do. The thing with this business is that old adage, and it's absolutely true: every film we've picked I would love to think is a cast-iron, box office hit, but we know that some are going to rise to the top and some are not going to do well. Hey, at least I feel that we've selected, in the first six titles anyway, a reflection of what FrightFest



Left to right:
FrightFesters
Ian Rattray,
Paul McEvoy,
Alan Jones
and Greg Day



For fifteen years, London's West End has been the domain of the genre's most cardinal nightmares and freakish reveries over the August Bank Holiday weekend. James Kloda speaks to Alan Jones and Paul McEvoy, two of the FrightFest gang responsible for all this macabre mayhem...



is about. I know it sounds a bit, "Now you can take the festival home with you", but that is, essentially, the truth. We need to get our name around: we have a good international reputation, but there are still people out there who have never heard of us.

Is that why you've chosen the distribution platform of VoD over physical media?

PM: We're not completely negating the physical, or even theatrical, aspect of some titles going forward. From the initial wave, there will be materialisation in some product format in the new year. *Aaaaaaah!* is going to be released as a features-packed Blu-Ray in January, for example. So we're open-minded: Limited Edition sets, perhaps Tesco or Asda exclusives.

AJ: We're in an arena with fans who are very collector-orientated, and if they want that, we can supply it, certainly for films that perform particularly well. I mean, look at *Arrow*: you and I have got every Argento known to man, yet we'll still buy the steelbook with all the bells and whistles. If that mentality comes into play with *FrightFest Presents*, great. At the same time, I'm trying to break the mould of people thinking that VoD is for lesser titles. We specifically chose them for this. When an audience approaches these films with the FrightFest name, they know they'll get something worth watching, not some piece of tat that's been lying around forever and is just dumped on this type of platform because it might as well be.

What's the difference between curating titles for the festival and those that you want a more permanent association with?

PM: The two are inextricably intertwined. Be it whether we're hosting the films in public or releasing them on the label, we treat them with love and care, which is what we want to instil in the audience. A sense of considered curation is what we want to bring to *Presents*, which is the ethos behind the festival. Obviously, we show a few rubbish ones in August, but that's by the by!

It takes curation to a 'remove' perhaps, that you've gathered together a wide range of films from the festival and you're cherry-picking from that.

AJ: For me, it's taken a while to get to the mindset that FrightFest is all about the undiscovered and finding new talent. *Night Of The Living Deb* is a good example, because I could see that was going to work

for both a horror audience and a romcom one: there are a lot of teenage girls out there for whom this could be their entry into the genre. We only showed it once in the festival as I wanted to keep it elusive, for people to talk about so others say, "Damn, I missed it." Well, now you can catch it. And *Some Kind Of Hate* was one of the most exciting movies I'd seen in the slasher mode for a while. That was the one title we were worried about from a censorship point of view: the BBFC were lenient and I am surprised they were. But they let it through and the film became a talking point. Good or bad, it's still a reaction.

***Some Kind Of Hate* is a political movie in the way it tackles very pertinent, and controversial, issues. It surprised me in how thematically considered it was...**

AJ: I worry that people think it's solely about self-harm. Which misses the point. There are so many strong messages in there, couched in horror iconography. The director, Adam Egypt Mortimer, is going to go places. That is something we try to do with FrightFest and have a proven track record of. Look at Gareth Edwards: *Monsters*. Jesus, he's the one that's gone the distance. Even back from the early days, Neil Marshall.

PM: *Some Kind Of Hate* did divide the audience, some disagreeing with the tone or the violent content. But filmmakers shouldn't be frightened of pushing those 'hot-topic' buttons. To break boundaries on taboo subjects is incredibly important. No one should constrict themselves in the face of censorship, or else everything would be bland, PG-13 affairs.

Can you talk about how the FrightFest brand has developed since its inception?

PM: It started off at the Prince Charles, borne out of a crazy idea I had whilst on holiday: the UK needed a genre festival of international stature as there was no-one else doing anything like that. The London Film Festival had totally side-lined these type of movies. We wanted to bring horror to the forefront, really champion it amongst such blanket absence. Looking back at that first year, I wanted the festival to be one for me: if I wasn't curating it, I'd want to be sat ten rows from the front watching these movies, meeting the directors and the actors without the red carpet bullshit. And getting all the free stuff!

AJ: When Paul suggested it, I thought, 'Fuck me, what a great idea: let's do something

over the August Bank Holiday weekend so we wouldn't have to put up with the Notting Hill Carnival.' For a while, we actually called it *The Alternative Carnival*. Before we knew it, we were a business. We never expected to be. But we just hit every sort of base: the internet was expanding, a female fanbase was growing. The information was out there, being discussed in ways in which it hadn't before. We caught that wave, and we just grew and our audience grew with us. People are with us today who were fifteen years ago: they've had kids, got married. It's amazing to me, that FrightFest has become so self-generating.

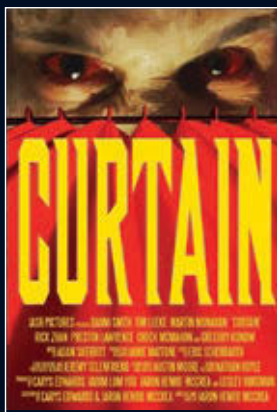
Is there any danger of FrightFest becoming too large, growing out of control?

AJ: We get offered many opportunities to partner with other events both UK-wide and internationally, but we want to keep things as being exclusive. And that's been the case right from the get-go. In those first two years, we were bringing a lot of foreign language cinema to the UK for the first time: the *Milke Takashi* stuff, *Battle Royale*, the early works of Guillermo (del Toro). We broke down the barriers for that.

PM: We try and keep everything FrightFest as being an adventure both for us and the fans. After we were forced to move out of the Empire in Leicester Square, we've taken the totally different route and commandeered numerous screens in the neighbouring Vue, turning the multiplex into a sort of horror heaven. FrightFest now has a Glastonbury-style feel: you have to make a choice. If you want to see a vampire movie, go see *Bloodsucking Bastards*; a more meat-and-potatoes piece, *A Christmas Horror Story*. So we have grown into something allowing the audience to timetable their own unique experience over the course of the weekend rather than us force-feeding our selections down their throats. And now with *Presents*, FrightFest is year round. Sure, we are expanding, but being careful not to overextend ourselves because we would lose that feeling of exclusiveness.

A big part of FrightFest is community. What's your prediction on how FrightFest Presents will add to and influence this community?

AJ: Time will tell. We're in this for the long haul: Icon have said to us that, if we're game, this is a five year affair. My commitment to it is that. To build a catalogue that we can all be proud of. It keys in to our audience desires:



who hasn't got a Netflix account these days? *FrightFest Presents* is a good project to be nurturing and the next wave of titles are equally as fantastic. That's the trouble now though: Icon have told us they want the cream of the crop, so we have to make sure we get the best stuff that's being offered.

So it's an encouragement for you to up your game as well.

AJ: When you look at it logically, everything feeds into one another. Often I'm covering a film in production, think it looks interesting and am onto the producer: "How about this for FrightFest?" It plays successfully. "Well, how would you like it for *FrightFest Presents*?" It's like getting in on the bottom rung and then seeing where you can go. And we've also launched FrightFest Enterprise, for the merchandise side of things, although that's more Greg and Ian's domain. They both defer to Paul and I when it comes to the films. Every now and again Ian will come in and stomp his little feet and say, "I want to show this movie", and we roll our eyes: "Oh God, let's have a look..."

Eclecticism seems to be the mot juste of the first six titles...

AJ: ...Completely by accident. When Icon said, "These are the first lot we want to come out", that's what we went for. I'm not sure whether the next lot will be so. But we should try and oversee that: you can't just release three slashers or four found-footage movies. You have to toss the salad a bit.

PM: What we tried to do with the first six films was set up a market stall and say 'this is where the genre is at the moment.' It's not just about stalk-and-slash movies or monsters on a beach, it's a real hybrid. And it follows from the festival itself. The genre has, and always will have, an incredibly diverse mixture of stuff, and the programming is necessarily a reflection of what is being produced worldwide during that year. We are always as strong or as weak as what is out there.

AJ: And that means we can't get too cynical about it. The chips should fall as they do. Whilst we're willing to take a punt now and again, we don't want to put thematic impositions on what we programme. If you're not genuine about what you do, it's easy for people to see through it.

FrightFest has sometimes been criticised for quality control. Does it bother you or is it something that you cultivate?

AJ: Is this all about the one year that we were accused of showing a load of rape-revenge movies like *Hidden In The Woods*?

Not specifically.

AJ: People were complaining that we were showing too many of these films. Well, if that's what's available, that's what's available! And another year, 'There's too much found-footage!' What else are we supposed to do? You want the really great movies and go to the studios who say, "You can't have it, it doesn't fit into our release pattern." So those who moan about why we didn't get this or that, we didn't get the invitation that went out to, say, the London Film Festival. Take *The Witch*: Universal said to us point blank, "Look, we don't see it as FrightFest. It's more art-horror, therefore it's going to be positioned as such." We can't just go and demand movies from people. Where FrightFest wins is that we do generate maximum publicity with a lot of honest Twitter response, so filmmakers use us as an arbiter of taste. We've had one instance where a picture was changed because of the audience response.

PM: Everyone's going to like a different thing, yet we try to be representative of the wider audience. So even if some of the films screened at FrightFest don't go down well generally, they still find their advocates. Whatever they are, be it *Zombie Women Of Satan* (one of our all-time classics!) or *Shockwave Darkside Massacre 3D*. To have a few selections peppered in that cause controversy or argument is important. *Maniac*, for example, a truly sensational and brave remake of one of the scuzziest horror films of all time: some of the audience absolutely hated it including top-tier critics who were angry that we had shown it. But if everybody unequivocally adored everything, nothing would shine. And you do that from a programming perspective as well, scheduling in something that is not as strong to highlight the merits of the second movie. It would be a boring festival if there was no disagreement.

I remember the strong reaction to *Berberian Sound Studio* from three years ago, from the incredibly positive to the violently negative...

AJ: Well, of course I'm going to show that! I'm a giallo fan. What is there not to understand about that? OK, it's arty, but I love Peter Strickland. You can't just sit down and watch one sub-genre. As Paul has touched on, a lot of structure goes into the

FrightFest programming. It may not look it sometimes, but where the selections are placed and when they play are really crucial to how they perform. We've had a lot of filmmakers come to us and say, "Well, why is our film here?" And we respond, "We know it's going to work best there." "How do you know?" "Because we've had fifteen fucking years of it!" There's a good example with one I can't mention, when the producers said, "Why are you only showing it once?" "Well, by the time of the second screening, people will have realised that it's not very good and there won't be an audience for the third." So they shut their mouths when they realise the logic of that. When directors come to me whingeing, I'm awful. I can really shout at them.

What strikes me is the 'quietness' of some of the choices: there's not an over-reliance on sudden jumps or shock-moments, tensions instead found in, with *Estranged*, glacial camerawork, or metaphysical dilemma in the case of *Afterdeath*. \$64,000 question I guess, but what defines horror for you?

PM: There's not an easy answer to that. And that's evident in the range of movies we've put out in the first six *FrightFest Presents*. Horror is uncategorisable, that's why it's so exciting. You never know what you're going to get. When we're looking at titles for the festival and now the label, it's like sifting for gold. You have to watch a lot of crap to get to that one work that will be mind-blowing. When I see something like that, I personally cannot wait to share it with an audience. And hopefully they'll connect with it in the same way that I have.

AJ: Anything that makes me think about something I never normally would. It's gone beyond the scare: the last movie that really shocked me was *Martyrs*, no question about that. Being in this game for so long, you can judge every creak and move, and know when the cat's going to be thrown into the camera lens. Now it's all about ideas and imagination. One of my favourite films in FrightFest this year was *Emilie*. That was so clever, taking an idea we'd seen a million times before, a babysitter who is not all she seems, and really playing with it: the feeling you got when she lets the kids watch their parents' homemade porno movies. Genuinely unsettling.

That's the sort of thing you want now, to experience something you haven't before. Back to *Martyrs*. *Pan's Labyrinth*. These are all FrightFest hits, that people love and talk about still, and will do for years to come. So I do think we get it right. **DS**

Above and opposite: Scenes and poster images from some of the first six *FrightFest Presents* releases, available to download now...

THE MYSTERIOUS ISLANDS



Part 2

Denis Meikle serves up more travellers' tales of terror in the concluding part of his epic feature...


The rise in popularity of holiday 'package tours' during the 1960s, and consequent expansion of public consciousness with regard to the geography of the planet, gradually ate into filmmakers' ability to hypothesise mysterious islands anywhere they chose on the globe and began instead to narrow the sub-genre to particular regions - mostly those outside of recognised Western spheres of influence. Alien shores were now less easy to conjure

than 'aliens' on more domesticated shores, and mad science came to the rescue again in place of lost continents teeming with prehistoric life.

Spanish-German co-production *Island of the Doomed* (aka *The Bloodsuckers*; 1967) bowed to the inevitable by settling for the Italian coast and an island not so much mysterious as a 'horticultural wonderland', according to one of the car-load of tourists invited to gawp at the florescent estate of

Baron von Weser (Cameron Mitchell).

The baron's botanical 'experiments' were of the kind that resulted in point-of-view shots of petrified victims retreating in the face of them while the viewer was left in the dark, until the lack of action was made up for in the last reel by a brutal axe-slaying and von Weser's immolation on his own blood-drinking *agave*. Somewhat appropriately, the film was directed by actor Mel Welles, who had experience with carnivorous plants from having owned one



Naomi Watts meets the legendary ape in Peter Jackson's *King Kong* (2005) and (opposite) an iconic image from *The Wicker Man* (1973)

when he played the florist in Roger Corman's *The Little Shop of Horrors* (1960).

(In 1981, Cameron Mitchell found himself on *Frankenstein Island*, the theatrical swan-song of producer-director Jerry Warren, the man who had picked up the baton of cinematic ineptitude dropped by Ed Wood. The film had 'island' in the title, but that was about as far as its association with the theme - or the motion picture industry in general - actually went.)

An attempt to ring the changes through

locations that were closer to home was the thinking behind *Island of Terror* (1966), *Doomwatch* (1972) and *The Wicker Man* (1973).

The first of them opted for 'Petrie's Island' off the east coast of Ireland for its invasion of self-replicating 'Silicates'; the second spread a toxic virulence among the residents of 'Balfe', presumably a fictional addition to the Scillys given that much of the film was shot in Cornwall; the third plonked its unsuspecting police sergeant into a hotbed of pagan superstition on

the bountiful Hebridean 'Summerisle'. The three formed virtually a *sub-sub-genre* in their own right in that their commonality was an insular Celtic community either at war with, corrupted by or philosophically detached from forces outside of itself.

Island of Terror was very much the conventional monster movie - the threat established after a series of mysterious deaths; the creatures increasing in number; a final confrontation with the beleaguered





Above: Cameron Mitchell meets a sticky end in *Island of the Doomed*, aka *Maneater of Hydra* (1967)

Right: Carole Gray is menaced by a silicone and Peter Cushing would give his right arm to be somewhere else in *Island of Terror* (1966)

Below right: Judy Geeson and a deformed character from the 1972 *Doomwatch*

islanders. (The following year's *Night of the Big Heat* [aka *Island of the Burning Damned*] from the same company, Planet, repeated the pattern, but staged it in that well-known offshore community of Milton Keynes.)

Doomwatch followed along similar lines, but dressed its mystery in a faddish veneer of eco-sensibility. Only *The Wicker Man* used its island setting to full advantage, dislocating its protagonist not only from the mainland but from the Christian culture that provided him with succour and security. The climactic appearance of the Wiccan colossus in which his blood would boil to irrigate the barren soil was as iconic an image of the subconscious primitive as any since Fay Wray found herself strapped between sacrificial pillars on Skull Island to await the coming of Kong.

Filmgoers of 1976 had no need to wait, as flamboyant Italian producer Dino De Laurentiis had beaten Universal to the punch with his own remake of *King Kong* (1976), a \$24m travesty penned by *Batman* scriptwriter Lorenzo Semple and featuring Rick Baker in an ape-suit.

Skull Island was not actually referred to as such and was pitched within tanker-distance of Surabaya in Indonesia, its former habitat of dinosaurs also diminished to one which harboured only an oversized snake.

Typical of De Laurentiis was the fact that a *full-size* Kong had been constructed for the production (by effects artist Carlo Rambaldi), but the result proved so immobile - not to mention ridiculous-looking - that it was given less than a minute's screen-time in long-shots of the beast on display in New York. Baker's actions inside the costume were as convincingly gorilla-like as those of Andy Serkis in his motion-capture suit for Peter Jackson's computer-digitised version of 2006, but no amount of green-screen could compensate for John Guillermin's near-wilful disregard for scale and the fact that it rarely seemed to occur to him to shoot a 40-foot ape from ground - rather than eye-level. The film's remaining claim to fame is as a historical document, in that it chose to set its famous climax not on the Empire State Building but on and around the twin towers of the World Trade Centre, now tragically no longer in existence.

MORE MOREAU

A declining American International was the surprise mover behind a large-scale and broadly respectful adaptation of *The Island of Dr Moreau* in 1977, made under its original title and set in the period in which it was written.



Former Hollywood A-lister Burt Lancaster played Moreau in subdued *Elmer Gantry* style and the island was situated 'slap in the middle of the Pacific Ocean, exactly a thousand miles from nowhere', according to partner-in-crime Nigel Davenport, though filming took place on the Virgin Islands.

Minor-league action specialist Don Taylor made a good fist of both the location and the sense of paranoia which gradually overwhelms the shipwrecked Michael York, holding back on the 'manimals' until character and situation were well established. Lancaster's scientist was less venal than Laughton's and humanitarian in his desire to intervene in heredity in order to eradicate inherited disease, and a degree of warped logic manages to pertain even when he goes off the rails and decides to make a manimal out of his house-guest.

Aside from the sex angle borrowed from *Island of Lost Souls* (but without the overtone of miscegenation), the film was as faithful to its source as the needs of action-adventure permitted - the climactic battle between the manimals and escapees from Moreau's menagerie is quite an eye-opener for its quota of dangerous stunts



involving fire and live animals - but Taylor rounds things off in more macabre manner with an iconic image of Moreau's corpse hoist to the gates of his stockade while his House of Pain burns to the ground behind it.

The Island of the Fishmen (aka *Screamers*; 1979) was modelled on Vincent Price-starrer *The City Under the Sea* (1965) and was not indebted to either *The Island of Dr Moreau* or Lovecraft short story 'The Shadow Over Innsmouth', as some sources suggest.





A boat filled with prisoners from a stricken transportation ship is beached on a remote atoll which happens to lie adjacent to the sunken ruins of Atlantis, the inhabitants of which have since evolved into gill-men. Richard Johnson, master of the island, is single-mindedly engaged in the extraction of gold artefacts from the ruins with the help of the gill-men while Joseph Cotton altruistically experiments on them for the future benefit of mankind. All but Claudio Cassinelli and pretty Barbara Bach come to a sticky end when the 'fishmen' eventually rebel amid the regulation volcanic eruption.

Sergio Martino's adventure-thriller was one of the better examples of the breed. After a shaky start during which Johnson overplays his controlling hand, the film settles into a satisfying blend of character intrigue and action set-pieces, with pacy direction and an effective squad of gill-men; the sub-tropical setting of forest and reed-pool was equally well utilised.

For its American release, Roger Corman's New World Pictures shot a new prologue featuring Mel Ferrer and the ubiquitous Cameron Mitchell, piled on the gore and changed the title to *Screamers* to sell it as a horror film, but Corman's intervention

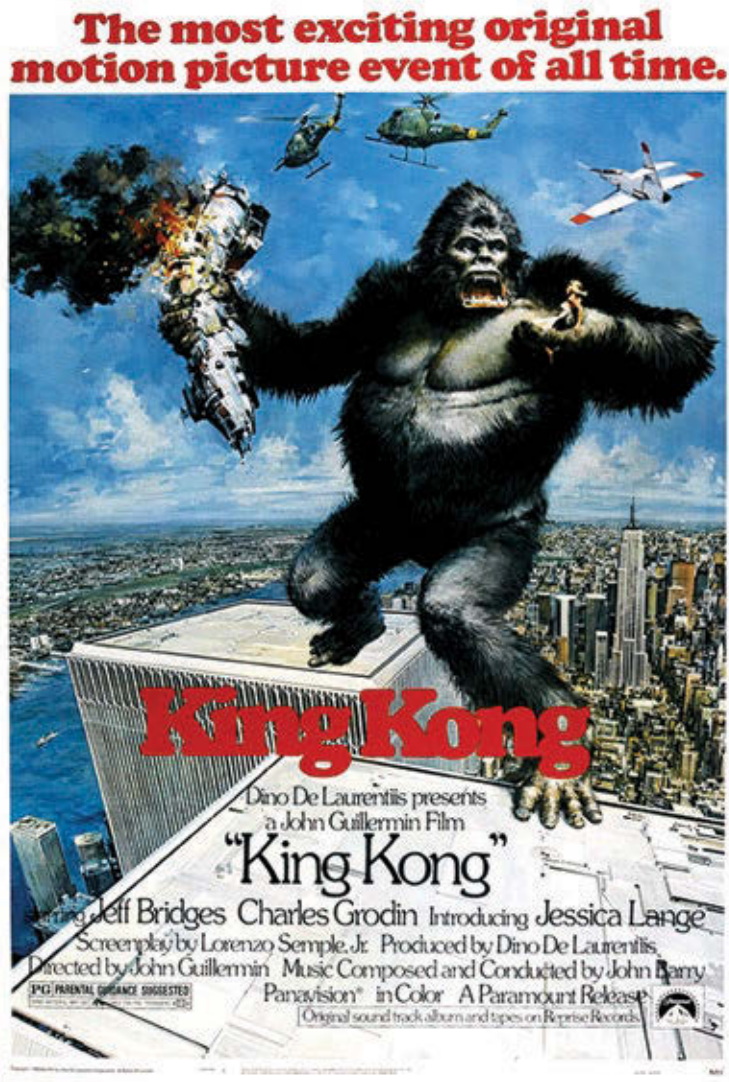
added only trite dialogue, cheap effects and a mismatched storyline to Martino's workmanlike effort; it also located the island in two places at once: the original *L'isola degli uomini pesce* had been filmed in Sardinia, featured Atlantis, and was therefore intended to be somewhere in the Mediterranean, but New World's title-card of 'The Caribbean Sea' was felt to be less alienating of its home audience.

CONQUISTADORAN DEAD

A more authentic Caribbean setting was that of *Zombie Flesh Eaters* (1979), whose fictitious island was genuinely in the waters of the Dominican Republic.

After a crewless ship sails into New York harbour in echo of Nosferatu's entry into Bremen, the film switches to its primary location of an isolated island colony where Richard Johnson is again the overseer, but this time struggling to contain a voodoo-in-stigated outbreak of zombieism.

A profusion of makeshift graves soon



Above left:

Edward Woodward as the Christian copper in *The Wicker Man* (1973). All other images from the 1976 remake of *King Kong* starring Jessica Lange in the Fay Wray role

start to give up their conquistadoran dead in grotesque, maggot-infested fashion and Fulci's splatter-fest quickly got down to the real business of pushing the envelope of gore to the limits of acceptability. The film was originally released in the UK as an 'X' with cuts, but it unsurprisingly found itself on the 'nasties' blacklist regardless. (*Zombie Flesh Eaters* star Ian McCullough trod the same rancid ground in the following year's *Zombie Holocaust*.)

The cannibal-zombie cycle of the early 1980s gave a temporary filip to the island sub-genre, though the backdrops to the likes of *Zombie Flesh Eaters* were picked more for their potential as breeding-grounds for



A TROPICAL PARADISE,
UNTOUCHED BY MAN...
WHERE A BIZARRE
CIVILIZATION EXISTS.



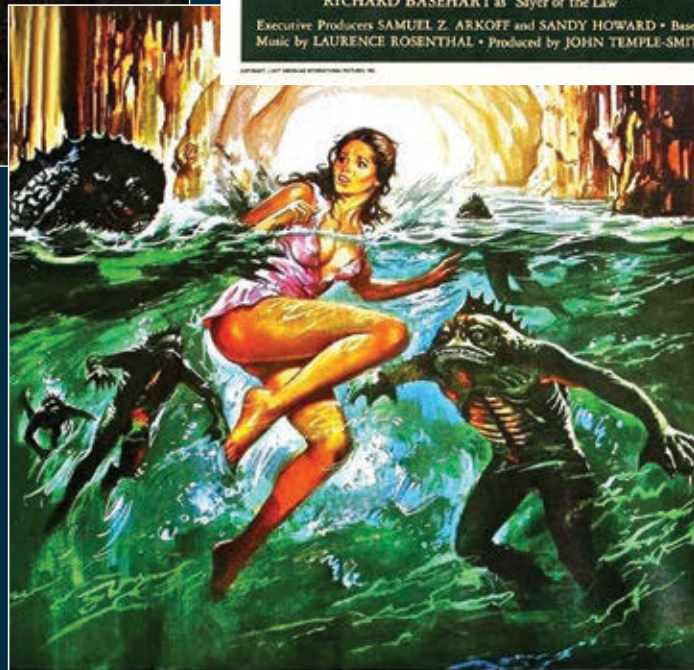
The Island of DR. MOREAU

Samuel Z. Arkoff Presents A Sandy Howard/Skip Seeloff/Major Production

BURT LANCASTER
MICHAEL YORK

starring in "THE ISLAND OF DR. MOREAU"
also starring NIGEL DAVENPORT • BARBARA CARRERA
RICHARD BASEHART as "Sayer of the Law"

Executive Producers SAMUEL Z. ARKOFF and SANDY HOWARD • Based
Music by LAURENCE ROSENTHAL • Produced by JOHN TEMPLE SMITH



SCREAMERS

BARBARA BACH / **RICHARD JOHNSON** / **CLAUDIO CASSINELLI** / **JOSEPH COTTEN**

with BERYL CUNNINGHAM CAMERON MITCHELL and MEL FERRER
Produced by LAWRENCE MARTIN Directed by DAN T. MILLER

A New World Pictures Release © 1981 New World Pictures



Top: Barbara Bach is a great catch in *Island of the Fishmen* aka *Screamers* (1979).

Other images: Burt Lancaster in *The Island of Dr. Moreau* (1977) and Michael York on his operating table

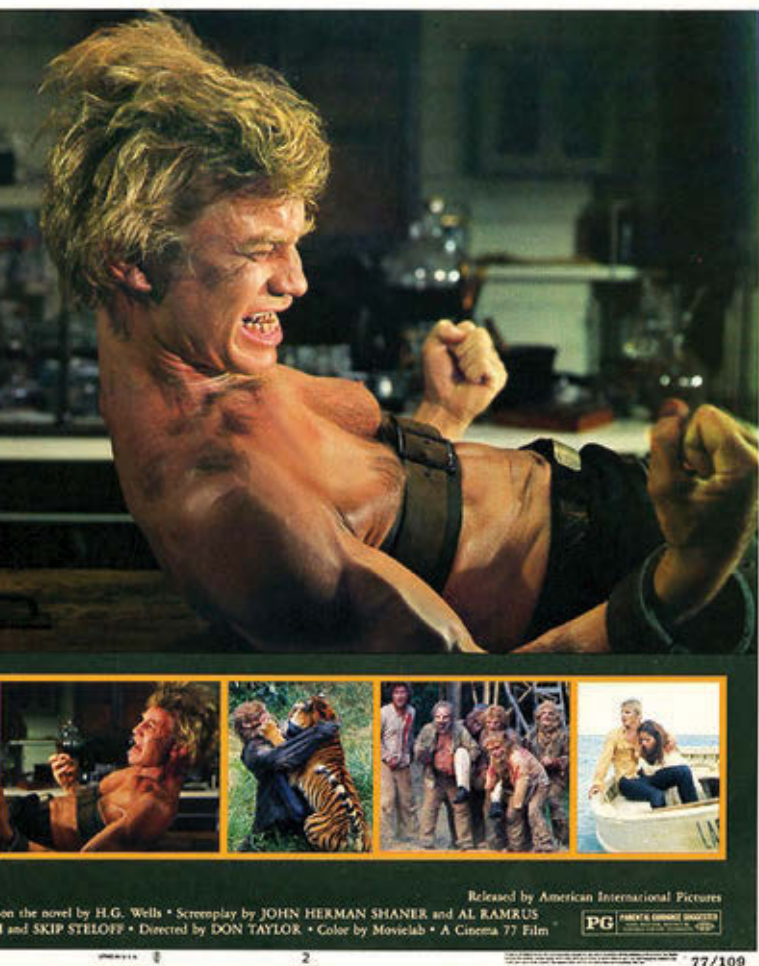
the kinds of exotic virus that exploitation filmmakers thought capable of animating corpses than they were for their kinship to the subconscious landscapes of nightmare. *Antropophagus* (1980), on the other hand, trod the tourist trail of *Island of the Doomed*, but off the coast of Greece rather than Italy. Outlawed in the UK during the infamous 'video nasties' campaign, the plot consisted of a group of disposable young things wandering aimlessly around a deserted town while being stalked by a deranged cannibal (Luigi Montefiori/'George Eastman'), its familiar tropes bolstered by a couple of scenes of graphic excess.

Its grindhouse riff on Goya's painting of

'Saturn Devouring His Son' had to be seen to be vomited over and it bestowed a cult status of sorts on director Aristide Massacessi ('Joe D'Amato' to his fans) for his calculated act of exploitation defiance - or stylistic flourish to devotees of Italian gore films. But having ventured to the far extremes of horror, there was nowhere thereafter for D'Amato and Eastman to go but into porn (*Erotic Nights of the Living Dead*; also 1980).

By 1988, *American Gothic's* location on an island was nothing more than a backwoods slasher looking for a new home, this time

in the straits off British Columbia. A group of weekenders ditch their seaplane near the isolated household of religious zealots Rod Steiger and Yvonne De Carlo and their three adult children, whose homicidal tendencies are inflamed by the disrespectfulness of the interlopers. The film was a crude but efficient semi-literalisation by director John Hough of Grant Wood's 1930 painting of the same title, whose intended affection for the pioneer spirit

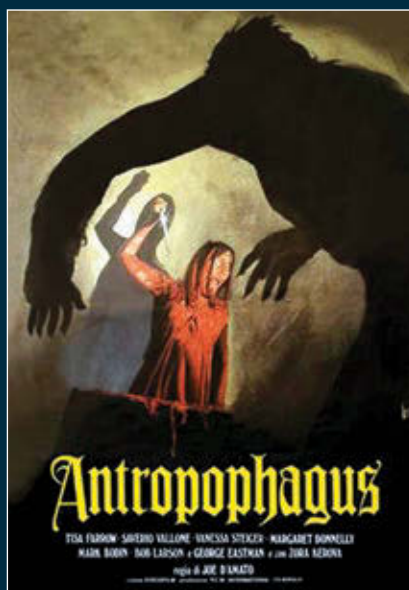


had itself been subverted over time by redneck parody, but its own sub-Freudian canvas was equally lacking in depth and subtlety.

Yet another version of *The Island of Dr Moreau* surfaced in 1996, inspired by a spate of big-budget remakes of horror classics: *Bram Stoker's Dracula* (1992), *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein* (1994) and *Mary Reilly* (*Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*; 1996), but the numerous cooks intent on spoiling this broth had decided against making it a period-piece (which would have been preferable) and updated it instead to the present day with references to Jimi Hendrix, Velcro and the UN. Moreau's Southeast Asian compound was a remnant of wartime US military occupation and his island was in the Java Sea, off the coast of Malaysia - the same location as that for 1976's *King Kong*.

At a princely \$40m, John Frankenheimer's film had everything that '90s Hollywood could possibly throw at it. Except for coherence and point.

The experienced Frankenheimer had replaced *Dust Devil's* Richard Stanley (who was fired in short order), the script had gone through various writers, and the petulant behaviour of both stars - Marlon Brando as Moreau and Val Kilmer as his assistant Montgomery - had almost brought the production to a halt. What eventually surfaced from all the in-fighting was as misconceived as the vivisectioned beasts on Moreau's island, and the resultant patchwork was more of an offshoot of the *Planet of the Apes* franchise than the allegorical terror of Wells. Working on the assumption that the plot of the novel would be familiar to many in the audience, the film dispensed with Moreau's surgical secret in the second reel



and introduced an entirely new storyline in which the manimals take over his compound and battle for supremacy among themselves. If nothing else, this allowed for an explosive climax with much loosing off of automatic weaponry.

Brando, still in *Apocalypse Now* mode, goes from unhinged to utterly insane (both character and actor), sporting a variety of headgear (including an ice-bucket) and spouting gobbledygook in the faux-British accent that he found so endearing for *Mutiny on the Bounty*.

His Moreau plays a piano-duet of Chopin's 'Polonaise' with the world's then-smallest man (Nelson de la Rosa) and he encores later in the film with a few bars from Gershwin's 'Rhapsody in Blue' (in a visual rendering of



Top: The natives really are revolting in *Zombie Flesh Eaters* (1979) and (above) George Eastman tucks into his own entrails in *Anthropophagus* (1980)



Congreve's oft-misquoted 'music has charms to soothe the savage breast'). His audience for the latter show their appreciation of classical jazz by eating him alive.

Taking his own weirdness cue from Brando, Kilmer's contribution to the general air of zaniness was to turn Montgomery into a spaced-out hippie and add a homo-erotic undercurrent before he, too, is mercifully shot to death. Frankenheimer clearly found it impossible to restrain his stars and their antics are more of a freak show than all the manimals put together: to say that Marlon Brando makes an affecting entrance as Moreau is to seriously understate the rapidity with which his appearance topples the film into farce: he arrives, pontiff-like, in a Moreau-mobile, waving to his obeisant



Above: Dinosaur action from Spielberg's *Jurassic Park* (1993) and (right) Marlon Brando and his mini-me in the troubled 1996 version of *The Island of Dr. Moreau*



Below: *The Call of Cthulhu*, made in 2005 by a group of Lovecraft devotees

VARIATION ON A THEME PARK

Three years before the abortive remake of *The Island of Dr. Moreau*, what is probably now the best-known 'mysterious' island in films had already been revealed to a select band of scientists by its secretive owner.

Isla Nublar was typically situated in the North Pacific, some 120 miles off the coast of Costa Rica, and like that in many of its recent predecessors, the mystery it contained was entirely man-made. It was Michael Crichton, the author of the novel from which director Steven Spielberg's film was adapted, who had cleverly thought to combine the visionary zeal of Moreau and his ilk with the 'lost world' concept of an uncharted region of Earth where prehistoric beasts of the Mesozoic era were somehow still at large: John Hammond (Richard Attenborough) was the billionaire industrialist in Crichton's novel and Spielberg's film who with supreme entrepreneurial flair had built his very own 'Skull Island' by populating it with living dinosaurs produced through the futuristic science of cloning. The difference in Hammond's case was that he intended to run it as a *theme park*.

Jurassic Park (1993) was to become the king of mysterious island films, all \$63million of it. But even the title resounded with the hollow ring of postmodernism, in that implicit in its variant on Carl Denham's

plan of exactly sixty years before to put Kong on show in New York's Madison Square Gardens was the notion that the uncharted outcrops of Wallace, Wells and the dozens of filmmakers who had taken their inspiration from them were no longer feasible in a world which international aviation and luxury cruise-lines had reduced to a global village in the interim. 'Real' mysterious islands were a thing of the past, replaced by the synthetic variety. Curiosity and wonder had surrendered to simulacra - to 'manufactured' dinosaurs and mad science in the service of multi-national corporations. New Zealander Peter Jackson (*Lord of the Rings*) made his own version of *King Kong* in 2006, and at a cost of more than \$200,000m. Kong was digitised and Skull Island enjoyed the size and topography of Jackson's country of origin but despite the eye-popping extravagance of its overblown effects, the thrill was gone; it was *homage*, and it wrote no new chapter in the imagination's need for unknown lands. 'He was the terror, the mystery in their lives - the magic,' Jeff Bridges had said in eulogy of Kong in 1976.

The most original use of an island in a genre film of more recent times has been as the scene of Sadako's death and source of her curse in Hideo Nakata's *Ringu* (1998), but the story's Oshima Island was far from fictitious: in point of fact, it lies off the Izu peninsula south of Tokyo. Like St Helena in the South Atlantic, remote islands these days are much more likely to play host to paedophiles than prehistoric predators - the 'monster' that plagues the dreams of parents, rather than

that which merely roams in those of their children. The Earth of the 21st century has given up most of its geophysical mysteries, and the cinema of fantasy - and the shores of dream in general - are the poorer for their loss.

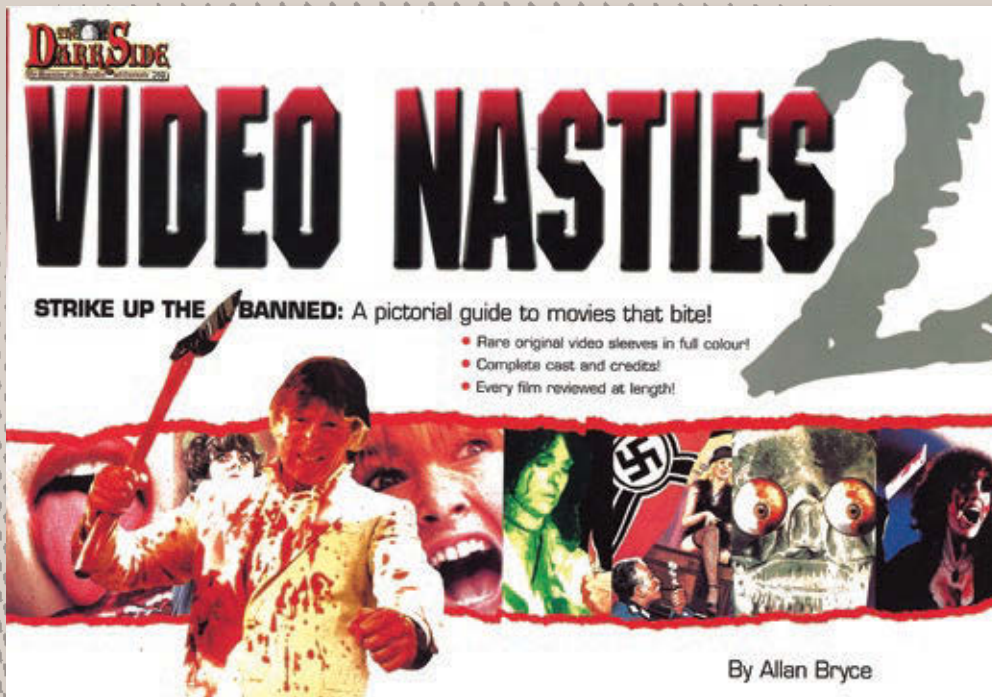
Postscript:

Peter Jackson's take on Skull Island may finally have populated its computer-generated vistas with the nightmarish creepy-crawlies that '30s' censors balked at in the original, but arguably the most terrifying island in fiction is R'lyeh, the prison-palace of HP Lovecraft's cyclopean devil-god Cthulhu, sunk in the depths of the Atlantic Ocean but able to rise on the back of a sudden tectonic shift and momentarily spew its foetid contents into the world of man, as it does in his 1926 short story *The Call of Cthulhu*. Lovecraft's tale was always too complex and technically ambitious for the simplistic demands of Hollywood but in 2005, a group of Lovecraft devotees produced a silent feature adaptation in black-and-white, as though it were contemporaneous with the story's date of publication. Scripted by Sean Branney and directed by Andrew Leman, the 47-minute result may have been low on budget but it was remarkably high on mood and atmosphere and it distilled the malign horror of Lovecraft's universe more effectively than any of the studio films which had tried to venture into similar Mythos territory. So much so that one was moved to wonder what Branney and Leman might have done with \$200m...? **DS**



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VIDEO NASTIES 2: A PICTORIAL GUIDE TO MOVIES THAT BITE

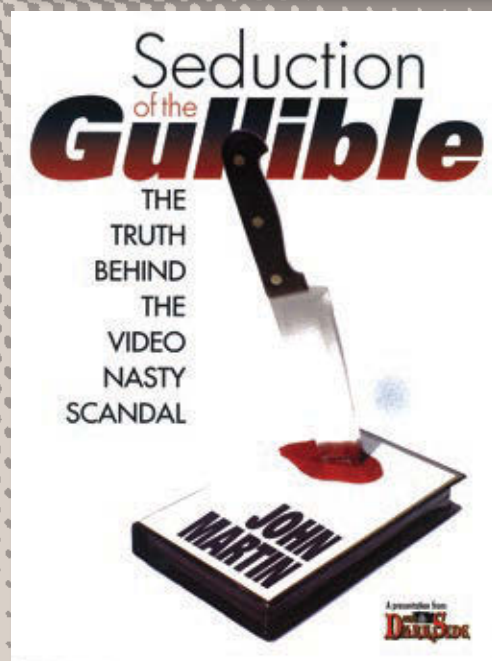
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FANTASY MOVIE TIE-IN BOOKS

Neil Pettigrew continues his look back at British books tied in to popular horror, science fiction and fantasy films...

PART TWO: 1957 to 1975

The first part of this article covered the first forty-five years of horror film tie-in books. It was an age when hardbacks predominated. *Part Two* picks up the story from 1957, and covers the age of the paperback. It was an age when almost every newsagents' shop had a rotating paperback display stand. These were rickety wire contraptions that squeaked when you moved them and threatened to collapse on top of you at any minute. Despite their dilapidated state, these stands were – to the eyes of a teenage boy – an exciting way to display dozens of the latest paperbacks with all their amazing painted covers.

They are rarely spotted in shops nowadays, but if I find one it still gives me a thrill to spin it around, and look at all the covers and spines – even though I know it will probably only contain today's dull romance and chick lit efforts. Maybe I am easily pleased these days.

A DIFFERENT ANGLE

A British paperback tie-in which turns up infrequently is the Beacon Books edition of *The Body Snatchers* by Jack Finney, published in 1957. Don Siegel's classic science fiction film, *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, had been released the year before. The paperback makes a brief mention of the film on the back cover, but its front cover oddly fails to exploit either the filmic connection or the sci-fi angle. In fact, its dramatic cover

artwork, with a rain-coated man carrying off a woman in a negligee, suggests a different angle altogether.

As all Dark Side readers know, a landmark in British horror film history occurred when Hammer Films released two hugely successful films – *Curse of Frankenstein* in 1957 and *Dracula* in 1958. And yet Hammer, a company usually known for its canny business sense, failed to spot that there was money to be made by issuing tie-in paperbacks to either film.

This left other publishers to jump on the bandwagon. The Bram Stoker classic was out of copyright, leaving the way free for Arrow Books to benefit from the success of a current film even though they had no connection with it whatsoever.

Very astutely, they brought out paperback editions of *Dracula* in 1957, 1958, 1959, 1960 and 1962. The books make no mention of the film, but their delicious cover artwork makes them irresistible to paperback collectors... despite the fact that Arrow were careful to avoid lawsuits by telling their artist to make sure the Count looked nothing like Christopher Lee. If not strictly tie-ins,

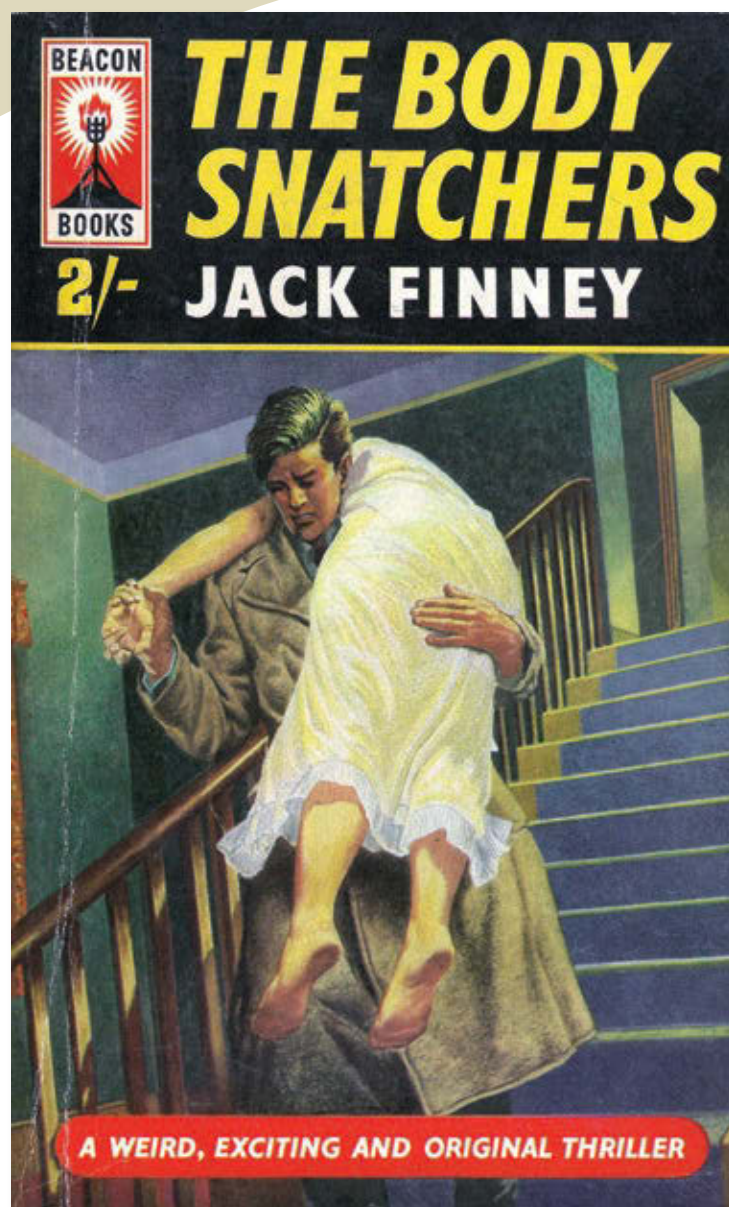
these are certainly "cash-ins".

In 1958, Digit Books published *Grip of the Strangler*, an adaptation by John C. Cooper of his own screenplay for the Boris Karloff film. It had a superb cover painting by Robert Osborne depicting lovely Vera Day getting strangled by Karloff, whose grisly face is seen reflected in a mirror.

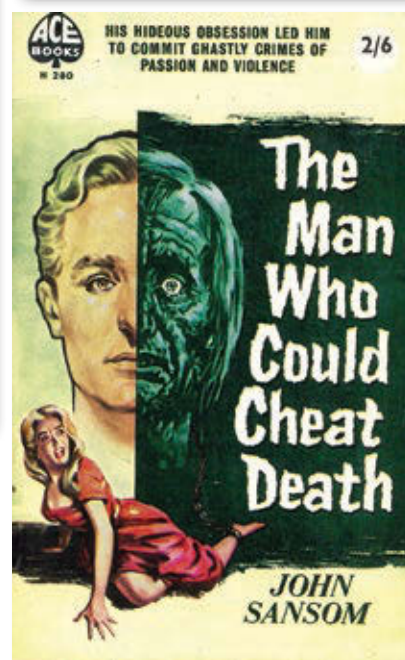
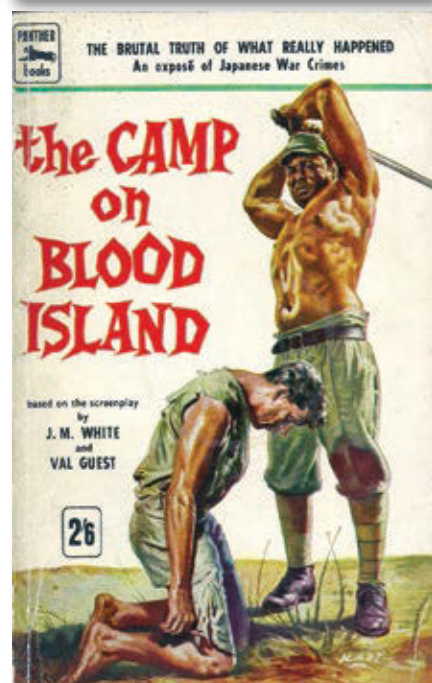
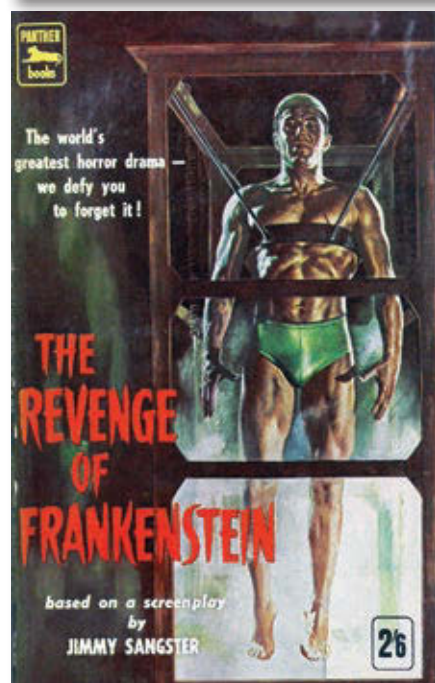
HAMMER PAPERBACKS

No doubt finally realising they had missed a trick by not issuing tie-in books to either *Dracula* or *Curse of Frankenstein*, Hammer more than made up for this oversight in subsequent years. Their first full-blown horror tie-in, in 1958, was *Revenge of Frankenstein*, with outstanding cover artwork (uncredited) depicting the monster hanging up in the laboratory. Published by Panther, the book was based on Jimmy Sangster's screenplay and had "additional dialogue by Hurford Janes" but no-one owned up to actually writing it.

That same year, 1958, Panther also published a tie-in to Hammer's *Camp on Blood Island*. Although not strictly a horror film, its horrific elements were heavily promoted by Hammer. It had a deliciously lurid cover (by noted artist Josh Kirby)



Note from the author: For a number of these photos, I am indebted to Arnie Davis, author of Photoplay Editions; and to Andy Muggridge



This page: Hammer Films delivered paperbacks of *Revenge of Frankenstein* and more, but failed to capitalise with a tied-in version of their first *Dracula* movie

showing a prisoner of war about to be decapitated. On the back was a good still of Richard Wordsworth getting shot as he clings to some barbed wire.

The following year, Hammer struck again when they arranged for Ace Books to publish *The Man Who Could Cheat Death*. Its author John Sansom turned out to be Hammer scriptwriter Jimmy Sangster using a pseudonym. The memorable cover image (borrowed from the publicity posters) showed both sides of Anton's Diffring's face, one young and handsome, the other aged and debauched.

Hammer also brought out two non-horror tie-ins, *Yesterday's Enemy* and *Hell is a City*, published in 1959 and 1960 respectively.

EYE-CATCHING COVERS

It was Digit again who brought out the British paperback tie-in to the 1959 version of Jules Verne's *Journey to the*

Centre of Earth. On the cover was a photo of James Mason and Pat Boone – a great disappointment for those of us who would have preferred to see some dramatic dinosaur artwork.

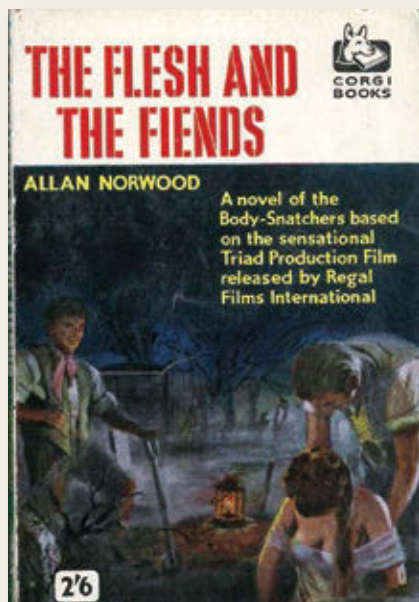
Corgi Books could usually be relied on to have eye-catching paperback covers and they did just that with an adaptation of *The Flesh and the Fiends* (1960). The cover artwork (by Roger Hall) showed grave-robbers Burke and Hare in action and the back cover had a good still of Peter Cushing and Donald Pleasence.

The Bat was a disappointing 1959 chiller starring Vincent Price, and the 1960 paperback tie-in to it was a distinct case of the cover being much more interesting than the film itself. The classic pulp-style artwork boasted a giant, toothsome bat hovering over a semi-naked girl – something that never happened in the film.

The works of Edgar Allan Poe are in the public domain, and hence publishers

have always been quick to bring out compilations of his works whenever one of his stories was adapted for the screen. Unusually, in 1960 two British publishers both made arrangements with Anglo-Amalgamated to bring out tie-ins to *House of Usher*, starring Vincent Price, the first of a series of Poe films made by Roger Corman. The Digit version was a very handsome book, with full-colour artwork on the cover that was a re-rendering of the British quad poster. The Pan book had a leering skull on its front cover (painted by Fox) and a still of Price on the back.





Panther's *Circus of Horrors* (1960) featured striking cover art by John Berry, with mad-surgeon-cum-circus-owner Anton Diffring surrounded by a montage of scenes from the film, among them Donald Pleasence being killed by a bear – or rather a lifeless furry prop. A tough book to find today.

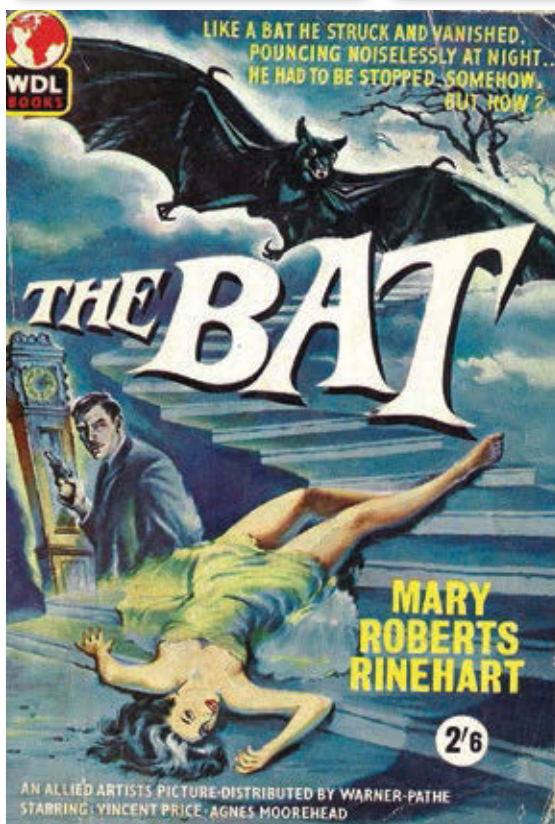
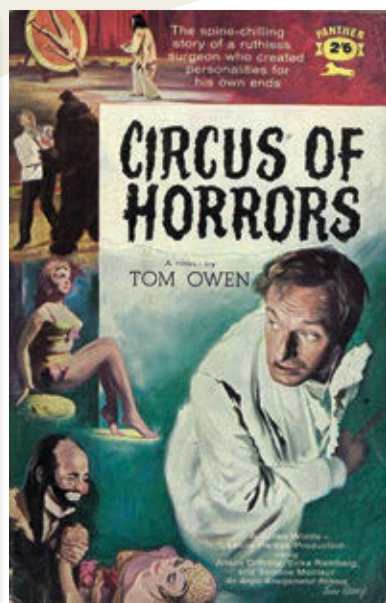
MEMORABLY CHILLING

The big horror film of 1960 was Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho*. There have been numerous paperback tie-in editions over the years, but the first British paperback tie-in was a 1962 Corgi edition. Its memorably chilling cover was a grainy photo of Janet Leigh in her underwear, the image designed to look like it has been slashed by a knife.

Science fiction fans were treated to an edition of John Wyndham's *The Midwich Cuckoos* which was filmed as *Village of the Damned*, a taut 1960 British chiller starring George Sanders and Barbara Shelley. The publisher was Penguin who, not wishing to besmirch its highbrow reputation with pulp-style artwork, instead put on the cover a tasteful still of Sanders with two of the blond-haired alien children.

Also in 1960, Badger Books published a tie-in to *12 to the Moon*, a very low-budget American science fiction film starring Ken Clark. Although an odd choice for a British tie-in paperback, it benefitted from a colourful cover and is scarce today.

The Hands of Orlac (1960) was the third (and weakest) film based on Maurice Renard's grisly novel of 1920. The second version, *Mad Love* (1935) starring Peter Lorre is easily the best. Four Square published a 1961 paperback to tie-in with the later version. Its front cover boasted a nightmarish image of clutching hands (painted by Edward Mortelmans), while the back cover had a still of Dany Carrel in a bikini – lying dead on the floor.



Above: When it flies, someone dies. The cover art for the paperback of *The Bat* was certainly more exciting than the film it was tied in to...

MORE POE AND HAMMER

Corman's *House of Usher*, and the Digit paperback that tied in to it, had been so successful that follow-ups to both film and book were inevitable. *The Pit and the Pendulum* was released in 1961, again starring Vincent Price. And once again, the book's cover artwork was derived from the film's posters. It's a very striking image and one of my favourite tie-in covers.

In 1961, it was Digit again who published a novelisation of Jimmy Sangster's script for Hammer's *Terror of the Tongs*. The striking cover artwork of Christopher Lee was painted by Robert Osborne.

Curiously, it would be another four years before Hammer issued any more tie-ins, so perhaps we can infer that the six issued so far had not done as well as the company had hoped.

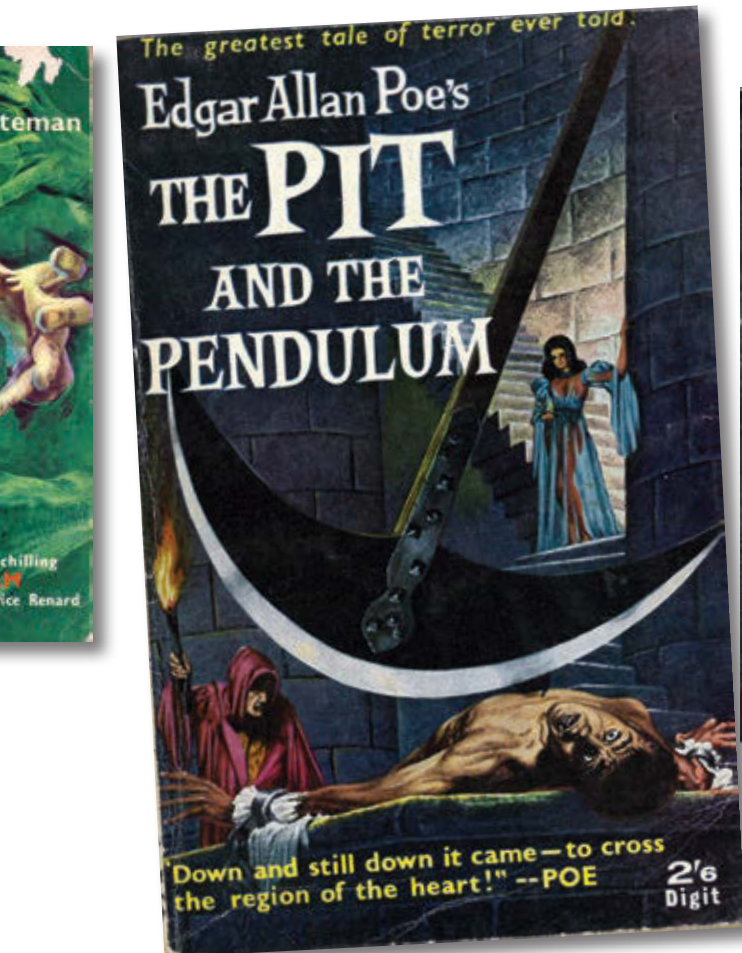


Also to be found on the rotating paperback stands in 1961 was *The Day the Earth Caught Fire*, a novelisation by Barry Wells of the original screenplay written by Wolf Mankowitz and Val Guest. The film remains one of Britain's finest science fiction movies. The cover artwork shows Edward Judd and Janet Munro and although it is eye-catching, you do wonder why a more dramatic image wasn't chosen – it looks like a married couple going for a stroll on a sunny day, walking past some road-works.

The year 1962 was a lean one for horror tie-in collectors but things picked up in 1963. There was a Four Square edition of *The Haunting* (by Shirley Jackson), with an eerie green-tinted still of Julie Harris on the cover (and an even scarier still on the back cover).

Also in 1963, the same publisher brought out *Whatever Happened to Baby Jane?* (by Henry Farrell), that most grotesque film starring Bette Davis and Joan Crawford.

A third tie-in of interest in 1963 was *Doctor Crippen*, arguably not a true



horror film, but who can resist a paperback that has a close-up of Donald Pleasence on the cover? This time, Digit was the publisher.

Pan brought out two different 1963 editions of *My Favourites in Suspense*, a collection of short stories which included *The Birds* by Daphne Du Maurier. Both editions tied in with the film, with its director Alfred Hitchcock on the cover. The first edition merely mentioned the film on the front cover; the second edition additionally had a back cover still of star Tippi Hedren pursued by crows.

Among all the 1963 paperbacks, there was also a lone hardback tie-in. It was John Wyndham's *The Day of the Triffids*, published by Michael Joseph and relatively scarce today. The cover photo showed principal cast members Howard Keel and Nicole Maurey looking suitably perturbed by the presence of walking plants.

A FINE PORTRAIT

Roger Corman's series of Edgar Allan Poe films continued with 1964's *Masque of the Red Death*, once again starring Vincent Price. As with *House of Usher*, two rival publishers, Pan and Panther, both arranged with the film-makers to bring out tie-in books. The Panther version boasted a fine portrait of Price on the front cover and a still of him with Jane Asher on the back. The Pan book re-cycled the same artwork from their *Usher* book four years earlier, and added a still of Hazel Court on the back.

There were two other British genre tie-ins in 1964: Fontana's *Night Must Fall* (with Albert Finney playing a scary psychopath) and Four Square's *Children*

Right: The cover art for *The Day the Earth Caught Fire* depicted a married couple going for a stroll on a sunny day, walking past some road-works...

of the Damned, a disappointing follow-up to *Village of the Damned*. Both chose to eschew artwork for their covers, and went for photographic images instead.

The following year, 1965, was something of a bumper year for British horror tie-in collectors with at least seven books published. However, this year also signalled the beginning of the end for artwork covers, as all seven books opted for photographic covers.

The 1965 crop includes that perennial favourite *Dr Terror's House of Horrors*, the Amicus compendium horror film that started a whole cycle of such films. The Pan tie-in book also marked the horror debut of John Burke, a prolific writer who, over a period of thirty-five years, penned a large number of film novelisations, including several horror titles. With its back cover stills of Peter Cushing, Christopher Lee and the rest of the cast, the tie-in to *Dr Terror's House of Horrors* is still hotly collected by genre fans today.

PSYCHOLOGICAL CHILLERS

Not to be outdone by Amicus, Hammer replied with tie-ins to two of their 1965 productions. *The Nanny* was one of their psychological chillers, and the cover to the Fontana tie-in depicted star Bette Davis and little William Dix. The novel was by Evelyn Piper, adapted for the screen by Hammer regular Jimmy Sangster.

She was, by Hammer standards, a big budget film, starring not only Peter Cushing and Christopher Lee but also Swiss stunner Ursula Andress, whose ample charms were depicted on the



Hodder paperback tie-in. To the disappointment of Hammer fans, it wasn't a novelisation of the film, but a reprint of the original H. Rider Haggard novel.

Still in 1965, *Bunny Lake Is Missing* was yet another in the "psychological chiller" sub-genre that was all the rage in the 1960s. It was based on a novel by Evelyn Piper, who must have had a healthy bank balance that year – she had also written the novel on which *The Nanny* was based.

Barbara Stanwyck's screaming face leered out from the cover of the 1965 tie-in to *The Night Walker*, the William Castle shocker with a screenplay by Robert Bloch. The film has its moments



Above and opposite: A selection of 1960s paperback favourites, including some classic Hammer and Amicus tie-ins

but Stanwyck and her co-star Robert Taylor both act as if they wish they were somewhere else.

For completists, there was also a Penguin tie-in in 1965 to *The Loved One*, a black comedy about the funeral business. The cover featured a less-than-thrilling photo of Robert Morley.

HAMMER OMNIBUS

Hammer launched into the tie-in market in a big way in 1966 when they commissioned John Burke to novelize four of their horror films. Each ran for 70 or 80 pages and all four were combined in *The Hammer Horror Omnibus*, a very handsome Pan paperback with outstanding front and back cover artwork by McGinn.

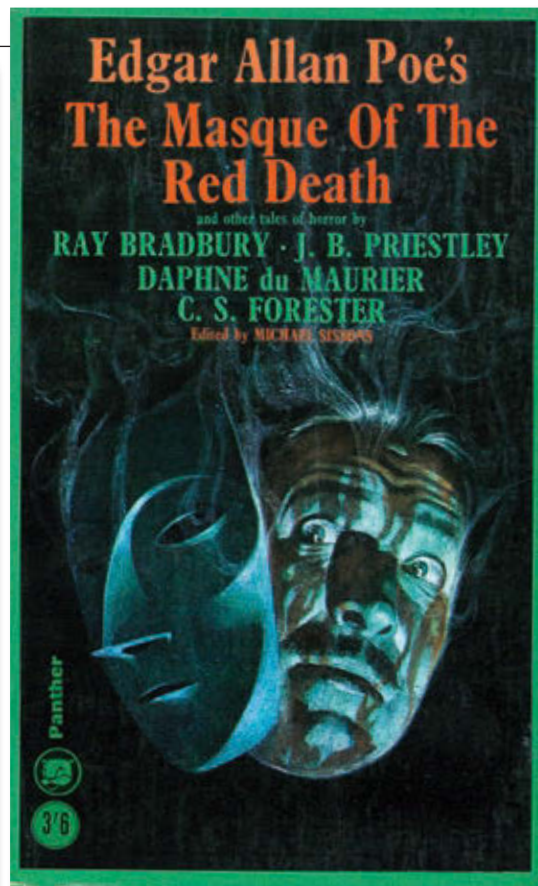
Two of the titles chosen were for current releases, *The Gorgon* and *Curse of the Mummy's Tomb*. A third was *Revenge of Frankenstein*, despite the fact that Panther had published their own, quite different novelisation years earlier. And, at long last, *Curse of Frankenstein* got the novelisation treatment, albeit nearly a decade after the film's release.

Also in 1966, Hammer arranged for Pan Books to bring out a tie-in to

historical novelist.

It was Pan again in 1967 who published *The Second Hammer Horror Omnibus*, an impressive follow-up to the original. It contained four novelisations by John Burke, each between 80 to 90 pages, of *The Reptile*, *Rasputin the Mad Monk*, *Dracula Prince of Darkness* and *Plague of the Zombies*. The artwork on both front and back covers is superb.

Amicus, Hammer's main rival, responded with a tie-in to their compendium film *Torture Garden* (1967). The film script was written by Robert Bloch, as were all the short stories in the paperback but anyone who bought the book must have been mightily confused because none of the stories had anything to do with the film! At least New English Library, the publishers, had the decency to put a still from the film on the back cover. Also in 1967, Mayflower published a novelisation of the screenplay of *The Shattered Room*, which had precious little to do with the H. P. Lovecraft short story on which it was allegedly based. This film has a smattering of passionate fans, but I am not one of them. Years ago, when I compiled a list of the most boring horror films ever made, *The Shattered*



The Witches, the latest in a series of films in a sub-genre best described as "Aging Hollywood Actress Reduced to Appearing in Low-Budget Horror Film". This time Joan Fontaine was the victim. The novel had originally been published in 1960 as *The Devil's Own* by Peter Curtis, which was in fact a pen-name for Norah Lofts, the well-known

Room was among them. Oliver Reed's attempt at an American accent made things seem even worse.

ANOTHER GOOD YEAR

The following year, 1968, was another good year for British collectors, with no fewer than eight horror film tie-ins to be found lurking in the creaking paperback racks of the nation's newsagents. As might be expected, Hammer horror films figured prominently among them.

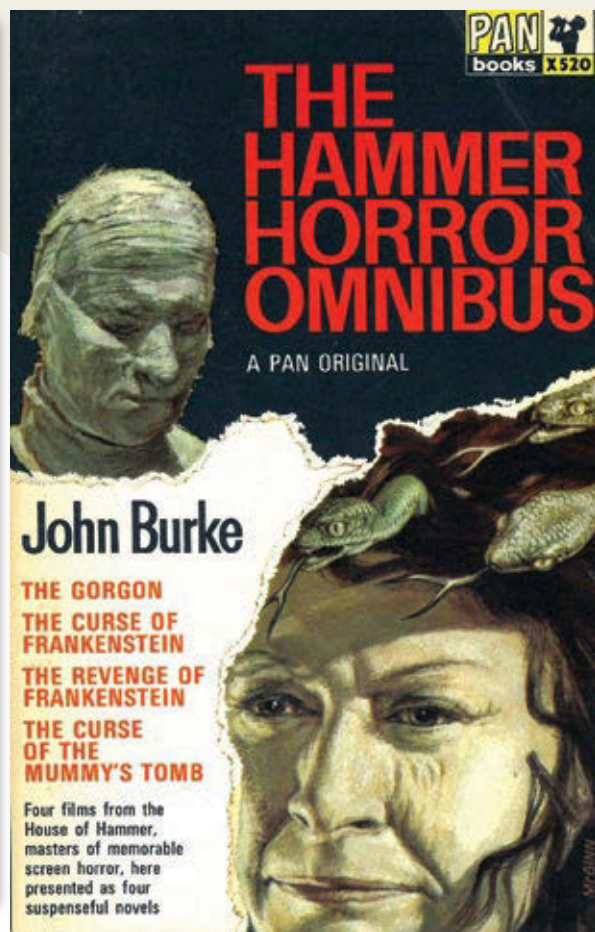
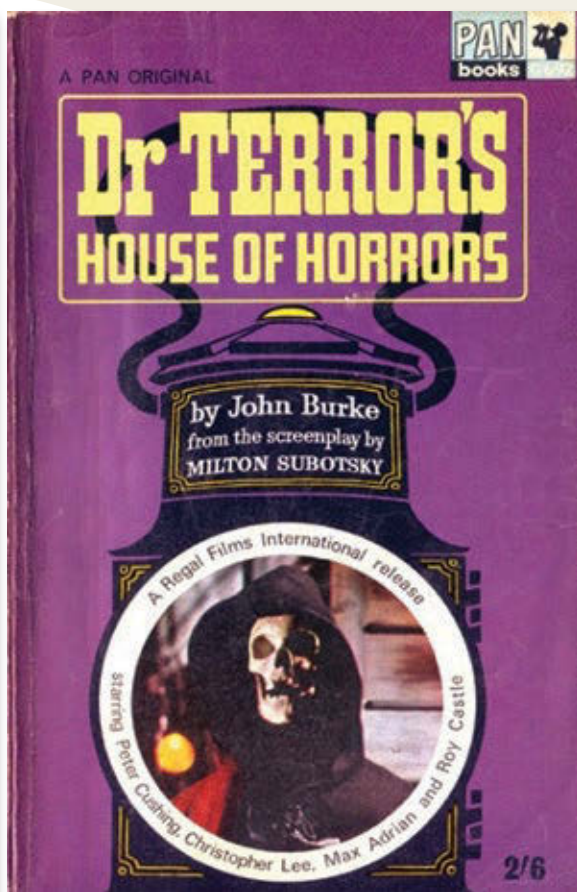
Arrow Books already had the rights to Denis Wheatley's novels, and their tie-in to Hammer's *The Devil Rides Out* sported a fine cover still of Charles Gray about to plunge a dagger into a young lady. A good still of Christopher Lee and other cast members graced the back cover.

That same year, Hammer filmed another Dennis Wheatley novel called *Uncharted Seas* and re-titled it *The Lost Continent*. On the cover of the tie-in was a delightful photo of mini-skirted Suzanna Leigh ensnared in the tentacles of a monster. Tentacles had also featured prominently in the thrilling cover painting that graced Arrow's earlier 1960 edition of this novel – one of my favourite paperback covers.

Another 1968 tie-in is a must-have item for fans of Peter Cushing. The Sphere Books edition of *Corruption* has a classy cover photo of the great man brandishing a bloody scalpel.

It was around this time that I began to buy paperback tie-ins whenever I could – which wasn't very often as they were usually priced at three shillings and sixpence, or even five shillings for the larger ones. This was a lot of money for a twelve-year-old boy, and usually the only books I could afford were second-hand ones bought at the Epsom market stall





mentioned in *Part One* of this article. But I got a few shillings by getting up at the crack of dawn to help the local milkman on his delivery round (does anyone actually get their milk delivered these days?) and later got a Saturday job in a newsagents shop. Now I was wealthy - I could buy new paperbacks!

One of the first new tie-ins I bought was *Witchfinder General*. This was just one of three horror tie-ins brought out by Pan Books in 1968. The film is now regarded as something of a classic, and the book featured a colour photo of a torture scene on the front cover. That sounds good, but curiously - and disappointingly - Vincent Price was unrecognisable: he was just a shadowy figure seen from behind. It does make you wonder what kind of people were involved in the photo-selection process.

The other two 1968 tie-ins from Pan were *Rosemary's Baby*, the William Castle-produced classic starring Mia Farrow; and *The Boston Strangler*, starring Tony Curtis. Both had film stills on their front and back covers.

Pan were back again in 1969 with a tie-in to Hammer's *Moon Zero Two*, a novelisation penned by the ubiquitous John Burke. It was an uncharacteristic science fiction effort from the studio, and they really should have known better. It was hysterically misjudged from beginning to end. To get an idea of how misconceived it all was, all you need to know is that two of the villains were played by Warren Mitchell and Bernard Bresslaw.

AN ODD DEAL

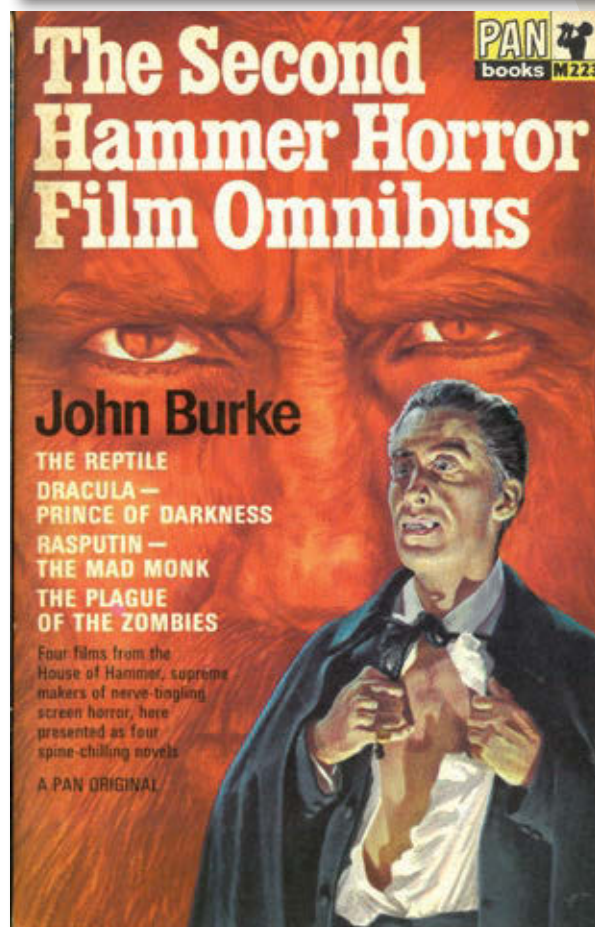
Fantastic Tales, published in 1969, was an unusual Edgar Allan Poe collection in that it tied in with not one but two

horror films, so publisher New English Library must have worked out an odd deal with two different film companies. A very curvaceous Jane Fonda, starring in *Spirits of the Dead* (aka *Histoires Extraordinaires*) graced the front cover. On the back were two more stills from this film (including one of Brigitte Bardot). Also on the back cover were photos of Vincent Price and Christopher Lee in *The Oblong Box*, the latest entry in the American International series of Poe adaptations.

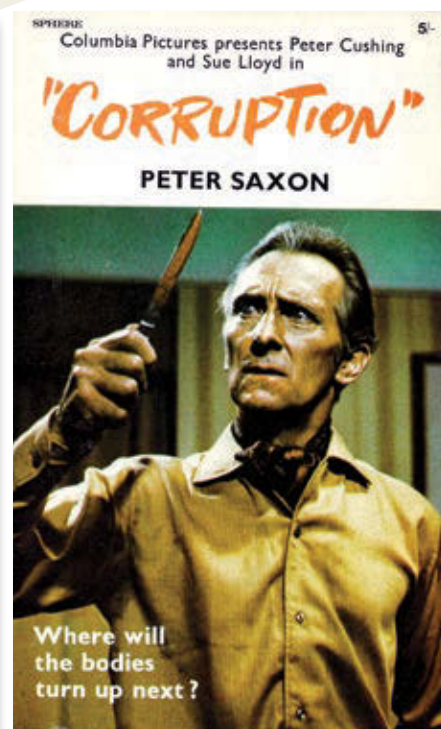
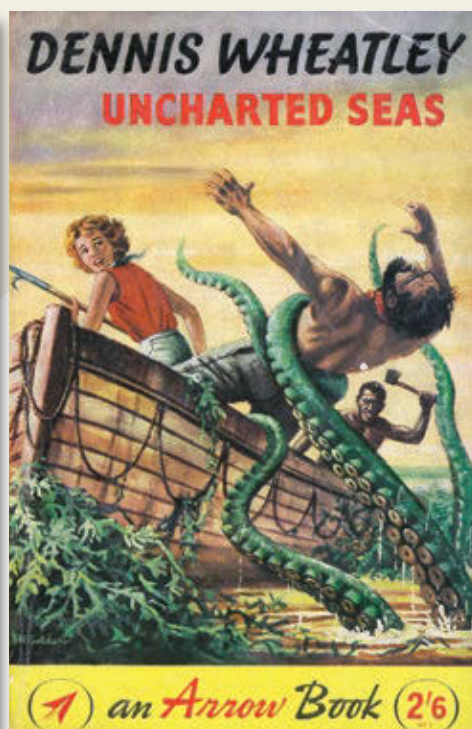
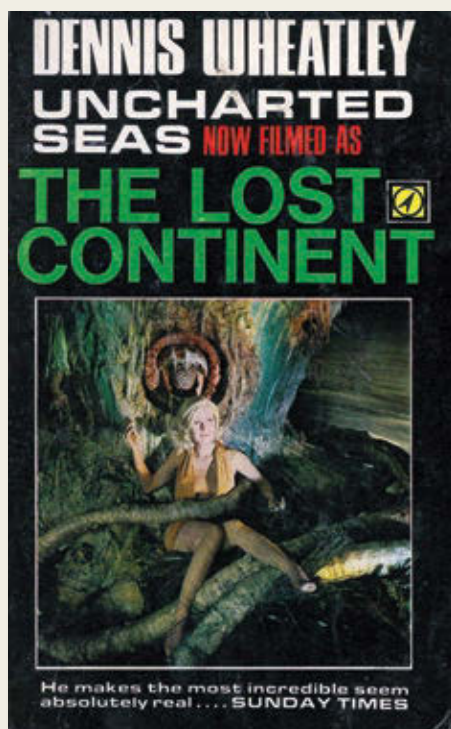
I will admit to never having seen *Twisted Nerve* (1968) but reviews suggest it is a rather good thriller. Hywel Bennett plays a murderous psychopath and Hayley Mills his intended victim. The *Sphere* tie-in, published in 1969, had an enjoyably intense photo of the two stars on its cover, with Bennett looking less than happy at having his cheek scratched.

The 1960s also spawned a number of British tie-ins to science fiction films and 'nuclear armageddon' movies. They include: *Dr Strangelove* (1963), *Fail-Safe* (1964), *First Men in the Moon* (1964), *Fantastic Voyage* (1966), *The Satan Bug* (1966), *Fahrenheit 451* (1967), *The Power* (1968), *2001 A Space Odyssey* (1968) and *Marooned* (1969). There isn't space here to describe them in detail.

The next decade kicked off with *Scream and Scream Again* (1970), an enjoyably incomprehensible muddle that was a lot of fun despite failing to make the most of its three stars, Vincent Price, Peter Cushing and Christopher Lee. One of its best ideas was a hospital patient who, every time he wakes up, finds another limb missing, until he is eventually reduced to just a helpless torso! Five Star brought out a



paperback in 1972 which wasn't strictly a tie-in as it made no mention of the film. But its timing and the fact that it chose to use the film title rather than the book's original title, *The Disorientated Man*, make it the closest thing to a tie-in printed in Britain. (There was also a US tie-in).



Peter Cushing also got a mention on the cover of another 1970 tie-in, *Incense for the Damned*, co-starring Patrick Macnee. Panther appear to have been a bit premature in publishing the book (by Simon Raven), as it was issued as *Doctors Wear Scarlet*, a working title for the film before it received its final release title. The film was a confusing excuse for sending cast and crew to Greece for some warm-weather location filming. *Mumsy, Nanny, Sonny and Girly* is a

rarely-seen British chiller directed in 1970 by the prolific Freddie Francis. Both book and screenplay were written by Brian Comport, who also penned the screenplays for *The Fiend* (1972) and *The Asphyx* (1973). The tie-in was published by Sphere who would figure prominently in the tie-in scene over the next couple of years.

A GOLDEN PERIOD

The early 1970s were a golden period for collectors of Hammer film tie-ins. In 1970, Fontana brought out a very handsome tie-in to Hammer's *The Vampire Lovers*. Its cover photos ensured it sold a healthy number of copies. On the front was Peter Cushing shoving a stake through Ingrid Pitt's heart; while on the back was a titillating photo of a topless Pitt romping with Madeline Smith. However, teenage boys hoping for a smutty novelisation of the film (myself among them) were disappointed: it was actually a collection of 19th century stories by Sheridan Le Fanu.

After this, the Hammer tie-ins came thick and fast, all published by Sphere. Unlike *The Vampire Lovers*, these were all novelisations of the screenplays, making them a lot of fun to read if you had seen the film. *Scars of Dracula*, with its good cover photo of Christopher Lee doing something unspeakable to a victim, is always a hotly collected book.

Hands of the Ripper (1971) featured an even more grisly cover photo, with Eric Portman standing over the bloody corpse of a girl in a bathtub. The cover photo for *Countess Dracula* was less gruesome, boasting Ingrid Pitt in glamorous pose, but compensated for this with a back-cover photo of her after she has aged into a wrinkled old crone.

This novelisation was penned by the late Michel Parry, a prolific writer in the horror and fantasy field, and an editor of many horror anthologies.

Readers disappointed by the lack of any smutty passages in the tie-in to *The Vampire Lovers* were better catered for by William Hughes' novelisation of *Lust for a Vampire* (1971). By this time, Hammer had increased the number of sex scenes in their films and the book reflected this, with several young ladies at a finishing school (Yutte Stensgard and Suzanna Leigh among them) getting up to all kind of mischief with the local men and each other.

Ken Russell's *The Devils* (1971) is not strictly a horror film, although it was certainly horrible in places, with plenty of torture, flagellation and other delights. Penguin, a publisher who wouldn't normally besmirch its highbrow reputation by having anything to do with horror films, felt this was sufficiently 'intellectual' to justify a tie-in. In so doing, they showed they enjoyed a bit of low-brow titillation as much as the next man, giving the book a pervy bondage cover photo of a nun in chains being molested by a priest.

A creepy close-up of a rat graced the cover of Panther's tie-in to *Willard* (1971). I recall that this film inexplicably whipped up a storm of publicity on its original release, despite being a mediocre story about social misfit Bruce Davison who uses his two tame rats to get revenge on his enemies.

In 1972, Fontana Books, who had published *The Vampire Lovers*, were back with another Hammer tie-in. This time it was *Captain Kronos Vampire Hunter*, starring Horst Janson and Caroline Munro. For the tie-in book, the title was abbreviated to the much less lurid *Kronos*. On the cover was a dramatic photo of John Carson about to be strung



up in a hangman's noose.

Pan Books brought out another horror tie-in 1972, *The Possession of Joel Delaney*, in which the title character was possessed by the spirit of a dead killer. The paperback featured a still of Shirley MacLaine on the cover, plus a decapitated head on a shelf.

Fantasy completists might also want the Puffin tie-in to *The Amazing Mr Blunden* (1972), a supernatural film aimed at a young audience with Laurence Naismith playing the ghostly title character. There were colour stills on both front and back covers.

AN EVIL FILM TIE-IN

The big horror film of 1973 was *The Exorcist*, and the Corgi tie-in was printed (and re-printed) in vast numbers. I fondly recall queuing up outside the Curzon in Sutton to see this. All the hype around the film meant that many in the queue were jumpy with nervous apprehension. Several well-meaning Christians accosted us, handing out leaflets and telling us not to see the film as it was 'evil'. As we waited, a man came out from the previous performance and said loudly, "I feel sorry for whoever is going to sit in my seat". When asked why, he replied, "I've just been sick in it".

David Case's *Fengriffen and Other Stories* had originally been published in 1971. It was re-issued by Pan in 1973 to tie-in with *And Now the Screaming Starts*, a film whose cast list included several fine actors – including Peter Cushing, Patrick Magee, Guy Rolfe and Herbert Lom – all wasted in a dull and dreary slice of costume horror from Amicus. The book's cover photo of an eyeless corpse promised far more excitement than the film delivered.

Madhouse, an AIP/Amicus

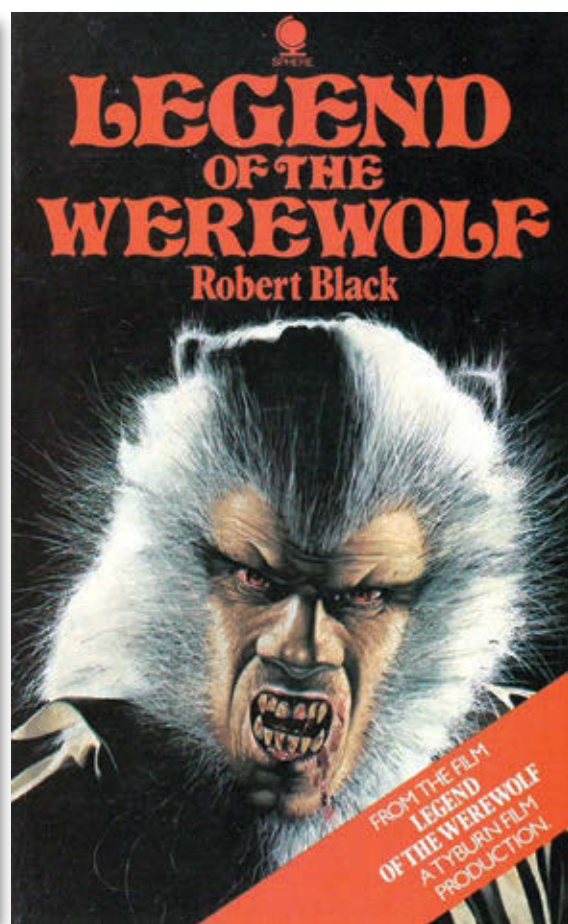


co-production starring Vincent Price and Peter Cushing, was released in 1974 yet the Sphere tie-in, with a good still of Price on the cover, is dated 1970. Is this an error in the book or was the film held up for several years? It was written by Angus Hall, who had penned *Scars of Dracula* in 1970.

In 1974, Fontana published a tie-in to *From Beyond the Grave*, an Amicus compendium film based on short stories by R. Chetwynd-Hayes. It followed the Amicus tradition of featuring four episodes where three are only so-so and one is excellent. The excellent final tale had Ian Ogilvy discovering a cobweb-dripping room behind an antique door. The odd choice of cover still showed Margaret Leighton on the telephone – surely something more horrific could have been selected?

In 1974 and 1975, artwork covers made a resurgence. The Pan tie-in to John Boorman's ridiculous science fiction film *Zardoz* reproduced Ron Lesser's striking movie poster on its cover. Considerably less pretentious was *The Land That Time Forgot* (1975), an Edgar Rice Burroughs fantasy starring Doug McClure. The Tandem paperback had good pulp-style artwork of McClure slugging it out with some Stone Age men, while Susan Penhaligon covered in the background.

Let's conclude this survey of tie-ins with two handsome 1975 books with good covers: *The Ghoul* and *Legend of the Werewolf*. Both were published by Sphere and tied-in with movies made Tyburn Films, a company which for a few short years attempted to exploit



the interest in Hammer horror films. Unfortunately neither film was good enough to give the Hammer executives much to worry about, and I am reliably informed that the books are better than the films. Both have good artwork images of their titular fiends, particularly the ferocious werewolf painted by Les Edwards.

Film tie-ins are still produced regularly and in today's bookshops you can usually find that several current films have been given this treatment. But the covers are so dull. They all look the same. For around three decades marketing departments have decreed that artwork is old-fashioned and will not sell. Instead, most of today's books have covers that use digitally enhanced photographs. They do nothing for me.

But public taste goes in cycles, and let's hope that one day soon the pendulum swings back in favour of artwork, and that it finally dawns on the marketing people that a striking piece of creative art can really add to the appeal of a book.

Finally, collectors may wish to attend the Vintage Paperback and Pulp Fair, taking place on Sunday 30th October 2016, at the Royal National Hotel, Russell Square, London WC1. There will be thousands of paperbacks on sale, including film tie-ins, horror, science fiction, crime, sleaze, westerns and much more. **DS**

If you want to know more, send me (Neil Pettigrew) an email: harry.np@virgin.net.

DANCING WITH VAMPIRES



**Denis Meikle looks
at the making of
Roman Polanski's
*The Vampire
Killers*, a colourful
Hammer-style cult
favourite starring the
tragic Sharon Tate...**

Sharon Tate
as Sarah,
and opposite
Roman
Polanski
with Jack
MacGowran

At the height of the 'Swinging Sixties', and on the strength of a mere two films - *Knife in the Water* (1962) and *Repulsion* (1965), critically-acclaimed 32-year-old Polish émigré director Roman Polanski attracted the attention of Filmways executive Martin Ransohoff with a plan to make a satirical Gothic horror film.

Polanski had already written a script with his regular collaborator Gerard Brach, under the title of *The Vampire Killers*, and Ransohoff promised a distribution deal with M-G-M and a budget beyond the wildest of Polanski's dreams when he was a student at film school: \$2 million. There was one condition: the film had to provide a starring role for Ransohoff's latest protégé - a 23-year-old, blonde-haired Texan beauty and former 'Miss Autorama' named Sharon Marie Tate.

Tate was not the first starlet in whom Ransohoff had taken a personal interest. He had already mentored Peyton Place 'wild child' Tuesday Weld, who had featured alongside Elvis Presley in *Wild in the Country* (1961), and more recently he had sought to advance the career of Swedish-born Ann-Margret, who had also featured with Presley in *Viva Las Vegas* (1964) and had been given a starring role opposite Steve McQueen in the Filmways-produced *The Cincinnati Kid* (1965).

Prior to her appearance in *The Vampire Killers*, Tate's main claim to fame was having been whipped by David Niven in J Lee Thompson's *Eye of the Devil* (1966), but the perceived combination of sex and sadism saw the sequence excised from the film on its British release. *Eye of the Devil* did, however, launch Tate as a 'new face' of sixties cinema along with her co-star David Hemmings, who would become the hottest male 'face' after his upcoming appearance in Antonioni's *Blow-Up* (1967).

Ransohoff had put himself in Polanski's good books by snapping up the US distribution rights to the director's latest film, *Cul-de-Sac*, but the female lead in *The Vampire Killers* had been written as a Jewess with 'long red hair'. Polanski had not seen *Eye of the Devil* and was unaware of Tate's contribution to it; had he done so, he might also have been a little warier of placing himself in the hands of Martin Ransohoff, whose post-production tampering on *Eye of the*

Devil showed a marked proclivity for the recutting and retitling of films which had been completed to their directors' satisfaction.

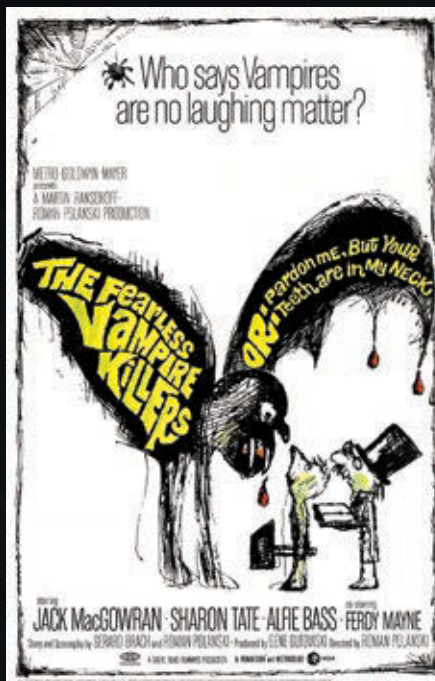
Polanski had current girlfriend Jill St John in mind for the role of Sarah Chagal, the daughter of an innkeeper in whom the film's vampire count takes a more than passing interest, but Ransohoff was not easily dissuaded and he invited the director to defer his decision until he had at least met the actress in question - whom he had 'discovered' on the set of TV sitcom *The Beverly Hillbillies*. With the prospect of an M-G-M feature tipping the balance, Polanski agreed to a tête-à-tête with Tate.

Is there by any chance a castle in the district? - Professor Abronsius (Jack MacGowran)

The Vampire Killers was conceived in part as a vehicle for Dubliner Jack MacGowran, as a reward for what Polanski saw as MacGowran's loyalty during the troubled shooting of *Cul-de-Sac*, and he had cast himself as Abronsius's naïve assistant, Alfred. It goes without saying that the date with Sharon Tate went better than Polanski could ever have imagined and not only was she cast in the role of Sarah Chagal (complete with auburn wig), but she and her director were soon appearing in gossip columns also.

Taking on the role of Alfred meant more to Polanski than 'doing a Hitchcock', where the Master of Suspense would make a covert appearance in the first reel of his films as a kind of good luck charm. Acting had been Polanski's first love and *The Vampire Killers* offered him an opportunity to refresh his skills in that department. But despite his considerable charm in person, the camera exaggerated his avian features and his stature allocated him the role of bit-part player at best. None of that mattered when he confined himself to cameos, but Alfred was effectively the protagonist in *The Vampire Killers*, which gave the film a lack of presence at the core of its narrative.

Roman Polanski was to prove himself one of the cinema's great directors, but his career would be peppered with lapses and periods of colossal self-indulgence. *The Vampire Killers*, made at the height of one of the most indulgent eras of the twentieth century, would be at best a distraction from his pursuit of cinematic art and at worst, an example of folie de grandeur to rank alongside the later *What?* (1972) and *Pirates* (1986).



OUT FOR THE COUNT

Professor Abronsius and his assistant Alfred are travelling through Transylvania on a mission to seek out the truth about vampires. They arrive at an inn, where garlands of garlic lead Abronsius to the conclusion that there are vampires in the area. After a few interludes of sexual misadventure, Count von Krolock arrives by sled. He kidnaps Sarah, the daughter of the innkeeper, and a chase ensues which leads Abronsius and Alfred to his castle. The Count welcomes them and they stay the night.

The following evening, they watch from the battlements as the dead rise from the castle's graveyard to participate in the Count's annual midnight ball; Krolock appears and tells the pair that their fate is to join the ranks of the Undead. As the vampires dance, Abronsius and Alfred join them in disguise to whisk Sarah away and flee on the sled. But she too is now a vampire and she bites Alfred. Abronsius drives on, oblivious.

'..Professor Abronsius never guessed that he was carrying away with him the very evil he had wished to destroy. Thanks to him, this evil will at last be able to spread across the world...'

SURREAL COMEDY

The film was remarkably unsophisticated by Western European standards of the time, particularly the standards which were being set by advances in surreal comedy in the mid-sixties. (Among others, the inimitable Norman Wisdom had been doing similar slapstick routines to those depicted by Polanski so much better for more than ten years.)

Where *The Vampire Killers* did score was in the exquisiteness of Douglas Slocombe's cinematography and the grandeur of art director Wilfrid Shingleton's Gothic halls. It was a film of ravishing pictorial beauty and opulent production design, with the snow-capped Dolomites standing in for the mountains of Transylvania, while the sound-stages of three studios - Pinewood, Borehamwood and Elstree - furnished the baroque elegance of Krolock's castle.

The highly saturated colours on display, a trademark of M-G-M since the 1930s, even managed to out-Hammer Hammer's then-infamous predilection for redolent primary hues. But in theme and plotting, Polanski's fourth major international feature had more in common with the Universal horrors of the '40s than the Hammer horrors which were shooting concurrently. Its stylistic affinity lay with *Abbott and Costello Meet Frankenstein*, rather than a notional pastiche of *Dracula - Prince of Darkness*, while the director's onscreen character looked to have been cloned from even further afield: Hütter in Murnau's 1922 *Nosferatu*.

As brooks flow into streams, streams into rivers, and rivers into the sea, so





our adepts flow back to us and swell our ranks. Soon, we shall be victorious and triumphant. We shall then hold sway over this Earth, which awaits our coming as autumn awaits winter... - Count von Krolock (Ferdie Mayne)

Beyond its luminous cinematography and richly bilious production design, there was little of commercial appeal in *The Vampire Killers*, whose anachronistic vein of Eastern European humour appeared to depend for its effect on time and money being spent in disproportionate degree to the quality of the resultant joke. A scene in which Albert flees from a vampire, only to end up face-to-face with his pursuer again, required the construction of a whole banquet hall, complete with minstrel's gallery, so that Polanski could capture the trick in a single take - even though the placement of the camera enabled the onlooker to see the punch-line coming

long before Albert does. Not surprisingly, Martin Ransohoff sought to pare the film down by an entire reel to meet the less tolerant demands of the US market. Polanski was incensed, but he had no contractual control over the final cut in America.

By July 1967, the absence from cinemas of Polanski's latest opus had become the cause of some concern in the press. A piece in *The Times*, which asked, 'What has happened to Roman Polanski's

latest film *The Fearless Vampire Killers?*', hinted at friction between director and distributor by disclosing that Polanski had refused to enter the film in the Berlin Film Festival because of Ransohoff's tampering.

The letter that Polanski wrote to Festival director Dr Alfred Bauer, informing him of his decision to withdraw, made clear the discontent that he felt over his treatment by M-G-M: 'Although my final cut prevails outside the US, Mr Ransohoff put forth a suggestion that his version, and not mine, should be presented at the Berlin Festival. Alternatively, the suggestion was made that in return for my version being shown in Berlin, I should agree to Mr Ransohoff's cut to be shown world-wide. ..I could not agree to either one of these suggestions.'

The best part of another four months elapsed before *The Vampire Killers* was released in the States in a 98-minute abridgement approved by Martin Ransohoff entitled *The Fearless Vampire Killers, or: Pardon me, But Your Teeth are in My Neck*; it was later released in the UK in its full-length version, as *Dance of the Vampires*.

For its November 13 opening on his home turf, Ransohoff tried to further salvage the situation by having a featurette shot for the trailer in which music-hall legend Max Wall delivered a lecture on the ways of the vampire as 'Cecil Havelock-Montague', telegraphing the film's only decent joke in the process. Wall's day had been over for some years before 1967, and Ransohoff was as ill-advised in his promotional pursuits as had been Polanski in his wish to parody Gothic horror films. *The Vampire Killers*, in either of its titular guises, drew a blank at the box-office on both sides of the pond.

Ladies and gentlemen, we take considerable pride and pleasure in bringing you the founder and president of the international society for the prevention, detection and extermination of... vampires! - Professor Cecil Havelock-Montague, PhD, LLV, BAT - technical adviser on the forthcoming motion picture, *The Fearless Vampire Killers, or: Pardon me, But Your Teeth are in My Neck*...! - American trailer, *The Fearless Vampire Killers* (1967)

When the gentlemen of the American press eventually caught up with it, they could hardly contain their derision as they contrived ever more elaborate ways to lampoon the lampoon in their columns, and many of their reviews turned out to be funnier than the film itself.

Joseph Morgenstern in *Newsweek* was typical: "'Shtick it where?' asks a funny fat lady in *The Fearless Vampire Killers*... Where? Where? Shtraight into the producer's heart, shtupid! Fix him good for this witless travesty, this bloody bore



of a take-off on vampire movies...

The film gets some laughs, maybe one per reel.'

'Polanski has requested that he not be mentioned in any connection with the movie,' *Time* magazine reported. 'The difficulty is that there are so many connections: he not only directed but also helped write the film, plays one of the principal parts himself, and his girlfriend is the female lead. But it is easy to see why Polanski would prefer to blush unseen. Neither spooky nor spoofy, *Vampire Killers* never manages to get out of the coffin.'

In the days when auteur theory held sway, it was par-for-the-course that the director of a film should shoulder the bulk of the blame. 'That was one of the most disgraceful experiences I ever went through,' Polanski recalled. 'After I finished *Vampire Killers*, (Ransohoff) took it away from me and cut 20 minutes out of it and redubbed it and changed the music. When he was through, no one could understand it any more so he added a little cartoon to explain what it was about. That's how it was presented in America.'

Given that Polanski had referred to *The Vampire Killers* in production as a 'cartoon with people', Ransohoff's intervention was surely not that wide of the mark. (This famous '20 minutes' of Polanski's has since become enshrined in legend. When a print of the film was submitted to the BBFC for classification, its running time was given as 108 minutes 16 seconds [before cuts]. US

This spread: Some great images from the movie, with Roman Polanski as the bungling hero Alfie and Ferdie Mayne as the vampiric Count von Krolock



release prints were subsequently quoted with a running-time of 98 minutes, the difference between the two being 10 minutes, therefore, and not the 20 which Polanski had exaggerated for effect.

American commentators compounded the error by taking the US running time and adding back Polanski's 20 minutes, to arrive at an 'original' time of 118 minutes for the pre-Ransohoff edit.)

IMPECCABLE EVOCATION

When the film surfaced in the UK, as the more floridly-titled *Dance of the Vampires*, the British critics were marginally more impressed by Polanski's version than their counterparts in the US were by Ransohoff's - though it mostly was a matter of degree. 'If from time to time the film is tedious, it is at least never predictable,' David Robinson opined in *The Financial Times*.

Allen Eyles in *Films and Filming* also sought to point out some virtues: '*Dance of the Vampires* lacks the psychological subtleties of characterisation found in *Knife in the Water* and *Cul-de-Sac*; but it matches them in the impeccable evocation of setting and atmosphere.' The BFI's *Monthly Film Bulletin* was more damning. 'There is no horror in the film, therefore no suspense and inevitably some stretches of tedium...'

The shambolic marketing of *The Vampire Killers* did little to hurt Polanski's career, or the ability of its producer to pick winners: Roman Polanski found a more amenable collaborator in William Castle on *Rosemary's Baby* (1968), and Martin Ransohoff moved swiftly on to the



MAX WALL IN THE FEARLESS VAMPIRE KILLERS

When *The Fearless Vampire Killers* was released, the distributor accentuated the film's comedy elements by producing a featurette entitled *The Fearless Vampire Killers: Vampires 101*. You can see this as an extra on the US DVD release from Warners. Shot in widescreen 2.35:1 and running about ten minutes it stars British comedian and entertainer Max Wall, famed for his funny walk, as Professor Cecil Havelock Montague Ph.D. LL. D. B.A.T. instructing the audience on the best way to kill vampires. Against the background of a lavish Gothic castle, Wall shows scenes from the film's trailer, and deals with a pesky bat and a sleeping Dracula-like vampire. It's a light-hearted, rather silly way of selling the movie which is in keeping with the film's trailer ("Two men on a vampire hunt. Simple? They certainly are."). The Warner release presents the film in a superb transfer and it is just a shame that they didn't manage to get a commentary from someone who actually worked on it. It is hardly surprising that Polanski himself didn't want to do one though.



This spread:

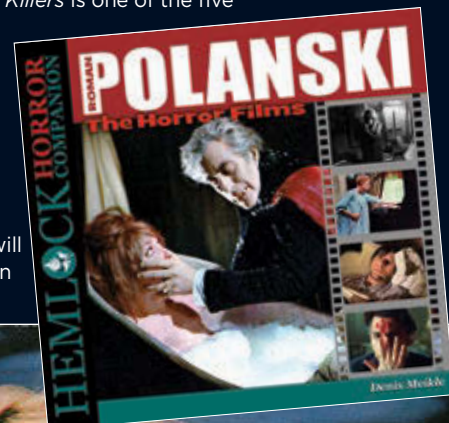
More atmospheric images on the movie (as supplied by Denis Meikle). Sharon Tate would later marry her co-star and director Roman Polanski

'helter skelter' through a random celebrity bloodbath.

Sharon Tate and her three companions were all butchered without mercy - as was a friend of the Polanski's caretaker, one Steven Parent, who happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. Abigail Folger was stabbed 28 times; Wojtek Frykowski was shot twice, battered over the head with a blunt object and stabbed a total of 51 times; hairdresser Jay Sebring was stabbed seven times and shot once. Sharon Tate was stabbed 16 times - five of which wounds, penetrating heart, lungs and liver, would have proved fatal by themselves. Parent was merely shot - four times. A length of nylon rope was looped around Tate's neck, thrown over a beam in the ceiling, and looped in a similar manner around the throat of Jay Sebring, who was lying nearby. The word 'pig' was daubed on the front door of the house, in what would later turn out to be Tate's blood.

It was a murder that shocked the world and brought a sudden end to the decade of 'peace and love'. Sharon Tate was internationally famous at last; she never quite attained stardom in life, despite her memorable participation in *The Vampire Killers*, but the horrendous manner of her passing at the age of only 26 made her unquestionably a superstar in death. **DS**

The Vampire Killers is one of the five films featured in *Roman Polanski: The Horror Films*, the latest 'Horror Companion' from Hemlock Books, which will be published on June 1.



more rewarding pastures of *Ice Station Zebra* (also 1968) and *Catch-22* (1970).

The film did little to help the stop-start career of the beautiful Sharon Tate, however, for whom big things continued to be predicted but who was still cast only in support in both *Valley of the Dolls* and *The Wrecking Crew*, the fourth and final instalment of Dean Martin's 'Matt Helm' franchise. A fifth Helm adventure - *The Ravagers* - was on the cards for production in 1969, but it was indirectly because of Tate that star Martin refused to reprise the Helm role...

A SUPERSTAR IN DEATH

Tate and Polanski had become an 'item' in the Dolomites while shooting location for *The Vampire Killers*; by the time the film was released, they were living together and on January 20, 1969, they were married at Chelsea Register Office. By August of that year, the couple had rented a palatial property at 10050 Cielo Drive, in the exclusive Hollywood Hills district of Los Angeles, and Sharon Tate was heavily pregnant.

On August 8, Polanski was in London about to fly out to join his new bride for the birth of their son, and Tate was in sole occupancy at their secluded house - currently in the company of three friends. Some time shortly after midnight, the house was entered by three members of self-styled satanic guru Charles Manson's 'dune buggy attack battalion', who were intent on inaugurating revolutionary



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Disc Review Ratings

- ★★★★★ = Excellent
 ★★★★ = Good
 ★★★ = Average
 ★★ = Below Average
 ★ = Abysmal

New DVD and Blu-ray releases reviewed by James Kloda, Steve Green and Allan Bryce...

CRAZE (1974)

Out Now. Nucleus Films.

Certificate: 18.

★★★★★

Jack Palance's days as a Hollywood leading man were well on the wane by the time he signed on for this nonsense, but he gives one of the most memorable performances of his career as Neal Mottram, a twitchy, leering, sexually confused British antiques dealer who smokes thin cheroots and has a great line in cosy polo necks and cardigans. *Craze* is no masterpiece but it is certainly fun in a sleazy way, starting the way it means to go on with a trashy scene in which a black topless dancer gyrates in perfect disharmony to the strains of stock voodoo music played in the style of Geoff Love. It transpires that all this multi-racial licentiousness is going on in the cellar of Neal's antiques shop and is part of a monthly ritual where he gets together with his witchy coven pals and offers up splashes of red paint to the great god Chuku, a spiky African idol with a face like a smashed crab.

"I pray the bloodletting pleased you," says Neal, but he doesn't get much change out of the daft-looking, bulgy-eyed Chuku until accidentally impaling one of the less agreeable witches on Chuku's sharp bits. Her blood spurting out still looks like red paint but the following day Neal discovers £1,000 in an old antique desk and attributes the find to Chuku rather than just careless housekeeping.

His gay, alcoholic live-in partner Simon (Martin Potter) is not best pleased with developments, however. "You and those crazy witches may call it sacrifice," he says. "The police will call it murder!"

Doesn't worry Neal though, he calls it cash in the attic, or the basement, and after he gives his lily-livered pal a slap for talking out of turn he's off out cruising some of Soho's tackiest nightspots in search of new victims to sacrifice to Chuku. It's not long before he gets three cherries up in the shape of sexy Julie Ege, who falls for his cardigan chic and cool British style, even though he sounds about as English as John Wayne.

Back at his gaff, Neal shows Julie how they do it either side of the Atlantic and then breaks out the wacky baccy and gets her to do a sexy dance for Chuku. By now she is becoming suspicious that her new man is not David Dickinson after all and attempts to make a run for it. Too late. After he's shoved her head in a

boiler she turns almost as dark a shade of red as the bargain hunting daytime TV star.

Ker-ching! The following day Chuku pays off again, and two Chinese guys lump out a small fortune for a pair of Ming vases despite the fact they look like they came from Woolies. Simon wants to close the shop and go off to Majorca, but Neal has his eyes on a bigger prize than a few weeks of wine-fuelled homosexual

antics on the Costa Packet.

This is where the film gets even more hilarious. Our hero hatches a convoluted plan to murder his rich aunt (Dame Edith Evans) by the simple expedient of putting on a scary rubber mask and jumping out of a cupboard. He then drives a stake through her heart just to make sure. The convoluted part comes in the way he fakes an alibi, visiting podgy former girlfriend Dolly (Diana Dors) and slipping her a mickey so she can vouch she spent the night with him.

With the bodies piling up it's time for the cops to come sniffing round in the shape of a permanently angry and unrealistically tooled up Michael Jayston, who has sweaty Neal tagged for a wrong-un from the word go. And he certainly doesn't believe that a style icon like our cardigan king would voluntarily spend the night with blowsy Di. "One would have to be pretty desperate to sail into that port" he says. Do you mind? Most hot-blooded males would have loved to drop anchor there in the 1950s, mate.

Directed by Hammer and Amicus veteran Freddie Francis, *Craze* was produced by the equally legendary Herman Cohen, known for serving up such salacious shockers as *Horror of The Black Museum* and *Berserk*. Like Michael Gough in the former, Palance's sneering character seems to revel in his own villainy, making it obvious to the cops that he is the man they are after. "You're quite the ladykiller, aren't you?" asks Jayston through gritted teeth, and Palance responds with a cheeky, lop-sided grin, "I do my share."

Herman Cohen managed to entice some top names to appear here in cameo roles, notably Edith Evans and Trevor Howard, who

both apparently worked just one day each. There's also an early appearance (as a copper) by future genre hero David Warbeck, and the lovely Suzy Kendall plays a cheery, chatty prostitute whose rates seem most reasonable, even allowing for inflation. That's just £20 for a Swedish massage with a double voltage vibrator. I bet that would do your back the world of good.

It's Palance who steals the show though. He doesn't need to chew the scenery because the film's so cheap that the scenery just dissolves under his manic stare. I'd guess that he had a lot of fun making this one and provided you go in realising what ridiculous nonsense it is, you will enjoy yourself too.

Though I wasn't too impressed by *Craze* when I first saw it at the cinema many years ago, the film has grown on me and now seems as comfortable as one of Jack's premium cardigans. Nucleus have given it a very decent transfer and providing that Marc and Jake sacrifice a half dozen virgins to Chuku then I reckon they will coin it with this release.

Extras: Ever the trailer king, Marc Morris has put together an amazing array of vintage promos from films directed by Freddie Francis. These include trailers for *The Ghoul*, *Legend of the Werewolf*, *The Creeping Flesh*, *Tales from the Crypt*, *Trog*, *Mumsy*, *Nanny*, *Sonny and Girly*, *Dracula Has Risen from the Grave*, *Torture Garden*, *The Psychopath*, *The Skull*, *Dr. Terror's House of Horrors*, *The Evil of Frankenstein* and *Paranoiac*. All that's missing are a trio of trailers, from 1962's *Vengeance*, the same year's *Two and Two Make Six* and, surprisingly *The Deadly Bees*. Marc has been searching for a trailer for that for ages but it has never been included on any of the film's DVD or Blu-ray releases. The other big extra here is the dapper Jonathan Rigby doing a 25-minute talking head chat to camera about the film, interspersed with clips

and stills. He rightly pours scorn on the film's dissing of delightful Diana - who had turned from a sex symbol into a great actress. I am not generally a fan of these kind of extras and would rather see an interview with somebody actually connected with the movie - difficult in this case. Jonathan is always good value however and provides entertainment and enlightenment in an equal measure. **AB.**

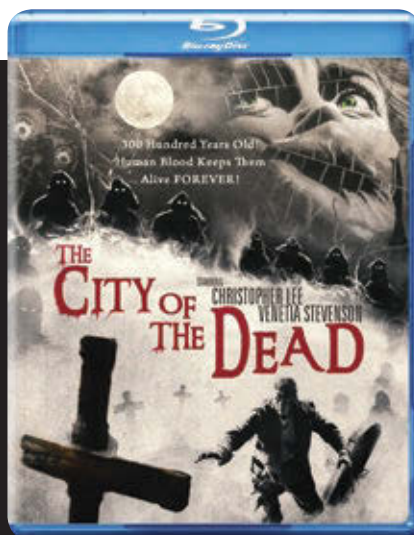


CITY OF THE DEAD (1959)**Blu-ray. Out Now. VCI. Certificate: N/A.**

★★★★★

Described by its star Christopher Lee as "American Gothic," even though it was shot at Shepperton in the UK, this terrifically creepy witchcraft tale was released Stateside as *Horror Hotel* ("Just ring for doom service!" advised the U.S. ads). The US version was two minutes shorter, removing some of the *Black Sunday*-like witch-burning prologue.

Young student of the occult Venetia Stevenson foolishly takes her teacher Christopher Lee's advice to visit the macabre township of Whitewood, Massachusetts. She discovers that the inn she's staying in is run by a witch who was burned to death in 1692, and that she is next on the list for a human sacrifice. An interesting plot combines with great direction by newcomer John Moxey, an effective Douglas Gamley music score and some superbly atmospheric sets and camerawork (you've never seen as much dry ice in a movie as they use here) to make this



a real genre treat. It was one of Amicus's first and best efforts, though the film was actually made under the Vulcan/Trans-Lux banner. The script (by George Baxt, who wrote *Circus of Horrors*) kills off its heroine early on in the same manner as Hitchcock's *Psycho*.

It's great to see this getting a region

free Blu-ray release and the picture quality is good but not great, with some scenes looking a tad bright. I also take issue with the 1.66:1 framing of the image, which looks a bit cropped in places. Digital enhancement has provided a clean image but takes away from the filmic feel, so sadly not the HD treat it should have been.

Extras: A 45-minute interview with Christopher Lee from 2001 packed with interesting anecdotes, plus a 16-minute short from the same year showing Lee chatting to fans. Also from the 2001 DVD release we get on camera interviews with actress Venetia Stevenson and director John Moxey (who also did *The Night Stalker*).

Author Bruce G. Hallenbeck provides a solo commentary, brave man, and comes up with some interesting background details. There are two further commentaries, by Moxey and by Lee (who is moderated by our old *Dark Side* pal Jay Slater). *Horror Hotel* is also included in a mediocre quality SD transfer. **AB.**

DEATH WALKS TWICE (1971/1972) Blu-ray.**Out Now. Arrow Video. Certificate: 18.**

★★★★★

Luciano Ercoli might sound like a weird Italian variation on botulism, but it's actually the name of a workmanlike director of giallo movies who has been called a bit of a cult, but wasn't offended by that. In the early 70s Lucio starred his sexy wife Susan Scott (real name Nieves Navarro) in *Death Walks On High Heels* (1971) and *Death Walks At Midnight*, the two features presented on this disc. They were both moderately successful at the time but failed to help 'Susan' achieve the same level of stardom as the likes of Edwige Fenech.

Death Walks On High Heels is the goriest and sexiest of the two movies, though it doesn't exactly wallow in either element, and features sexy Susie as a dancer in a kinky Paris nightclub whose routines seem to be causing severe trouser turbulence for posh English eye surgeon Frank Wolff. "I like it when you're all blacked up," he compliments her in her dressing room after the show, proving that the spirit of the great Al Jolson still lives on.

Susan is the daughter of a diamond smuggler whom we see stabbed to death on a train in the opening scenes. The cops think she might know where a cache of hidden diamonds is, and so does this guy with a mysterious Dalek voice who keeps phoning her up and breaks into her apartment to threatens to "exterminate" her with a straight razor. Among the shoals of red herrings on view, her hot-headed boyfriend Michel is the obvious prime suspect, so she dumps him and heads for the UK with Doctor Frank. But the killer is only one step behind, if walking rather awkwardly because he still can't get used to those bloody high heels. Tell me about it.

Plus points here are great British coastal locations, some sexy night club routines and a gory razor murder which is almost up there with *The New York Ripper*. Scott looks good but doesn't bare as much as all the blokes in the audience would like and Carlo Gentili gets all the funny lines as the cynical police inspector on the track of the stolen diamonds. The plot is contrived even by the usual head-scratching giallo standards. You probably won't get it until about the fourth viewing, but the camerawork and Stelvio Cipriani's groovy score will leave learned giallo buffs with a smile on their face, especially if you also wear high heels while watching it.

Death Walks At Midnight actually bears the onscreen title of *Cry Out In Terror*,

though you are highly unlikely to be doing this while watching. I cried out for a large gin and tonic.

In this one Susy plays a sexy model who is talked into trying a hallucinogenic drug so a sleazy, chain-smoking scandal mag reporter pal (Simon Andreu) can snap her pulling funny faces while under the influence. She experiences a vision of a funny looking fellow with a criminal mullet and sunglasses murdering a girl with a spiked metal glove. The cops interview her because they love talking to sexy birds about murders, but nothing comes of it. Then she is contacted by Sophia Loren lookalike Claudia Lange, who thinks that the murder victim she saw was her missing sister. The killer lures our girl to a nearby apartment in a scene that carries echoes of *Rear Window*, and she is also pursued by two psychotic thugs (one an uncontrollable giggler) who try to hang her in her own apartment twice but are both times interrupted by the doorbell ringing. Those Jehova's Witnesses do have their uses.

One of the things I love most about these old Italian giallos is how ridiculously contrived they are. Spaghetti western specialist Sergio Corbucci had a hand in the screenplay for this one and I reckon he had way too much chianti while thrashing out the finer details of plot and motivation. It all gets a little silly before we get to a rooftop fight scene finale where one of the minor baddies gets his brains splattered all over the pavement - the most gory bit in the picture by far.

I'd rate this slightly higher than *Death Walks On High Heels*, but both movies share the same cast of strolling players with Carlo Gentili again getting the funniest lines as the sad sack cop who is always a dollar short and a day too late.



Arrow's Blu-ray presents both movies in their original 2.35:1 Techniscope, and the 2K restorations both look amazing. The coastal locations in *Death Walks On High Heels* are stunningly visual and I know that my daughter Amber (a real retro gal) would fantasise about the set design in both films. Nostalgia buffs even get to see London's Great Windmill Street in the 1970s in HD. That will ding dang do for me, my friend.

Extras: Commentary by the estimable Tim Lucas, who has done more than just about anyone else to educate people as to the virtues of relative obscurities like this. You will learn a lot by listening to his enlightening comments. Introduction by screenwriter Ernesto Gastaldi, and a new interview with director Luciano Ercoli and Nieves Navarro, the latter still looking great for her age. Composer Stelvio Cipriani is also interviewed about his great score, which you will be humming for days. **AB**

WORST FEARS (2015) DVD.**Out Now. Nucleus Films. Certificate: 15.**

★★★★

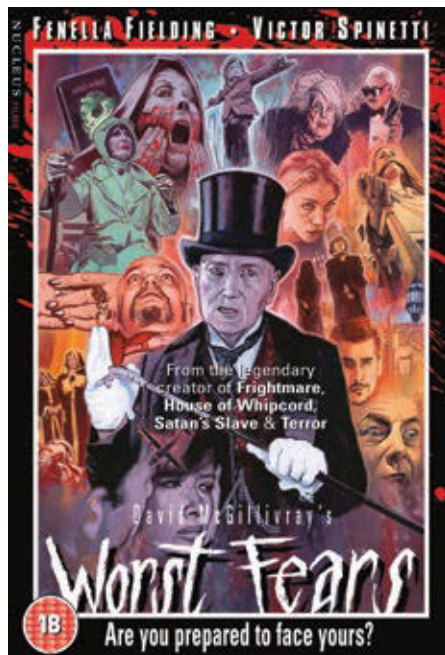
Worst Fears were a series of short films made in the middle of the last decade, produced and scripted by veteran David McGillivray, who made his name as a screenwriter with Pete Walker and Norman J. Warren in the '70s. Here they have been packaged as a portmanteau feature, with shoddy wrap-arounds of McGillivray introducing each piece as a creaky host in an empty cinema. As with any of these exercises, the results are patchy, but there are a few that rival Roald Dahl's *Tales Of The Unexpected* for their scorpion sting and eccentric quintessence.

In *Wednesday*, meek, Eastern-European cleaner Lily gets called to the house of the deliciously crabby Mrs. Furnival (Anna Wing), who is soon joined by her gentleman caller Mr. Pomeroy (a muggingly macabre Victor Spinetti) to dance and take tea.

Alarm bells ring when Lily finds missing cat collars and skulls in a chest full of copies of *The Daily Express*, slowly realising that she is part of a ghoulish charade fuelled by those panic-inducing headlines: *Wednesday* is a waggish satire of a certain demographic.

Tincture Of Vervain concerns a Suffolk witches' coven causing mischief amongst the parish community, suffering diarrhoea on the mayoress or casting fatal stigmata to bothersome vicars who won't stop ringing church bells on a Sunday.

The group are eager to receive a visit from the Grand Conjuror (Fenella Fielding) who will announce her successor: their pantomime cloaks and provincial welcome are in humorous contrast to her arrival in a vintage Rolls Royce and '40s socialite demeanour - when asked if she'd like some nettle tea, Fielding sighs her disgust with a weary, "Don't you have any champagne?" With delightfully doltish performances and a wickedly saucy script,



McGillivray further satirises elderly busybodies and the men who pander to their whims.

With one exception, the films are flat when taken out of an English setting. In *The Place Of The Dead* crudely uses its Moroccan setting to chastise the unfaithful protagonist looking for rent boys on a day when superstition decrees that intercourse might reincarnate an evil spirit. And the 'dream-within-a-dream' structure of *We're Ready For You Now* brings only minor surprise amongst its *Hostel*-from-hell predictions. Elsewhere, the hopping between flashback and 'present day' in *After Image* does little to conceal the metaphysical state inhabited by its photographer protagonist. And there is not enough malevolence in the substitute of *Child Number Four*, despite blithely odious turns from the parents who beg for onscreen

comeuppance.

Perhaps best of the lot is *Mrs. Davenport's Throat*, the titular woman (Celia Williams) prepared to travel anywhere in search of romance. Arriving in Lisbon to have a handsome chauffeur waiting for her, she is taken to a vivisection laboratory where demands are made to consolidate her late husband's debts. This is a succinct masterclass in misdirection and represents McGillivray at his best: mordant, perverse and teeming with sexual frisson.

Extras: *Horror Icon*, a sardonic mockumentary about McGillivray, following the travails of amateur filmmaker Joe McCallum attempting to track down the 'controversial' scriptwriter. The talking heads are extensive and unrestrained in their borderline hatred for the man: Warren claims that a cleaner rewrote lines of his dialogue for *Terror* because McGillivray's were so tawdry; Walker, Spinetti and Fielding all tell McCallum to 'eff off' when he asks them to talk about this supposed icon. He is also alleged to be an alcoholic, pederast and cocaine smuggler, McCallum's quest culminating at a FrightFest event where Alan Jones confesses he only shows McGillivray's films because he pays him to.

In an accompanying featurette, McGillivray admits to not having a clue what was going through his mind at the time, and just as well, as it was never completed as a project. Fortunately, the rushes have been edited together by Jake West from Nucleus, and the result is an hilariously subversive character assassination with an excellent punchline. As further complement, a bloopers reel of the original footage reveals that many of the actresses from *Tincture* refused to speak ill of their producer on camera, and has McGillivray intervening when Kim Newman alleges that goat sex was a prominent feature of his early drafts from the '70s. At least we know one of his worst fears... **JK.**

LA BAMBOLA DI SATANA (1969) Blu-ray.
Out Now. Twilight Time. Certificate: N/A.

★

You really have to be a giallo completist to get much joy out of this ridiculous late 60s effort from one-time director Ferruccio Casapinta, who also came up with the ho-hum Agatha Christie-style storyline built around the reading of a will in a crumbling old Italian castle.

Following the death of her uncle, pretty blonde orphan Elisabeth (Erna Schurer) returns to her family's castle to see how much she has copped for in the way of inheritance and brings along her fiancé Jack (Roland Carey) and some of her vapid mates. Soon after her arrival our heroine starts having sexy nightmares in which Jack takes on the role of the castle's 500-year-old ghost. Then she is kidnapped by a hooded figure and stripped and unconvincedly tortured in the castle's dungeon. It's enough to make her want to put the place on the market if only the stamp duty wasn't so high.

All the ingredients are here for a great giallo. We get naked Eurobabes, a black gloved killer, howling wolves, dungeons and



thunderstorms. Unfortunately these ingredients are all undercooked and blended so badly that the movie outstays its welcome very quickly. The ludicrous climax is straight out of *Scooby Doo* and provokes as much laughter as the scene where everyone gets jiggy round the jukebox for no discernible reason. The Blu-ray transfer is pretty good for such an obscure title, and the audio is clean enough for you to enjoy the dubious pleasures of Franco Potenza's organ-heavy score.

Extras: Unusual commentary track by David Del Valle and Derek Botelho, two mates who spend much of the time indulging in friendly banter and contradicting each other. They don't seem to know that much about the film though, and dismiss it as rubbish. One interesting fact that comes out of this is the revelation that the lead actress once described zoom-happy director Casapinta as "an idiot who couldn't do anything." Apparently Casapinta was offended because he bugged off and the film was hastily put

together by the AD and the cinematographer - by the look of it in a Kenwood blender. **AB.**

BURIAL GROUND (1981)**Blu-ray. Out Now. 88 Films. Certificate: 18.**

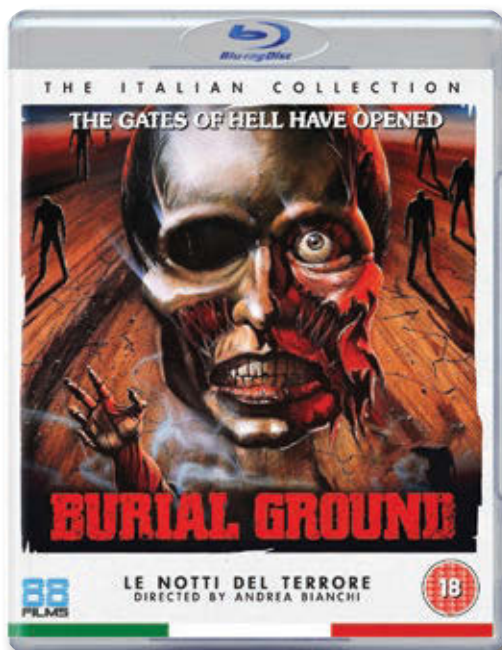
★★★

The ridiculous thing about the whole Video Nasty era in the UK is that it was predicated around how “realistic and believable” the special effects for these movies were supposed to be, so much so in fact that one misguided Trading Standards officer even thought that *Cannibal Holocaust* was a real life snuff movie!

Of course anyone who has actually bothered to watch half the movies on the nasties list realises that even the most gruesome special effects tend to lose their impact when located in a laughable movie, and *Burial Ground* is indeed a prime example of this. The plot is as simple as a nun's prayer and involves this beardy guy in a remote mansion reciting the words of an ancient incantation and bringing a bunch of mouldy-faced zombies to life. “No! Stand back! I'm your friend!” says he. But nobody with a beard like that deserves to live, so the ungrateful sods kill him, and then a number of horny couples turn up to stay in the same house, and with or without beards they get scoffed by the zombies too.

Characters in this have such cherishable lines as: “You look just like a little whore... but I like that!” The screenplay could have been written by a goldfish, but director Andrea Bianchi didn't give a Donald Duck about that because he hired Lucio Fulci's favourite make up effects man (Gino De Rossi) and gave him an unlimited supply of latex and Kensington gore.

Standing out amidst the oddball cast is Michael, who is supposed to be a young kid



but looks like he's a dwarf of around 50. He sounds like he was dubbed by John Inman, and he bites his mum's tits off at the end, which trumps “I'm free!” in our book.

What cracks me up about this movie (and indeed Fulci's much better *Zombie Flesh Eaters*) is the way that characters react when confronted by a mouldy-faced zombie. I don't know about you, but I'd be doing a Linford Christie,



mate, leaving my brown trousers hanging in mid air.

Here we get a couple who seem frozen to the spot as a glassy-eyed zombie ambles slowly up to them like Dean Martin heading for a bar stool. “It's a walking corpse!” Yeah, full marks for observation, buddy.

The zoms here are slightly more inventive than the Fulci variety, using a battering ram to break a door down and arming themselves with scythes and stuff, all the better to chop a maid in half when she hangs out the window (as you do). We get decapitations, disembowelings and eyeball poking, but the dwarf boy biting off his sexy mum's raspberry ripples is the scene that everyone talks about by the water cooler. It's simply the breast.

Great zombie effects plus a crap script and inept direction add up to a fun film which ends on a high note with some very poorly spelled subtitles: “The earth shall tremble... graves shall open... they shall come among the living as messengers of death and there shall be the nighths of terror...”

Profecy of the Black Spider.

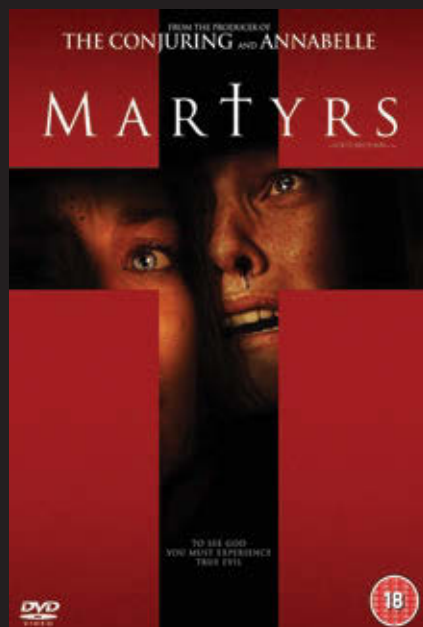
You have been warned, or wanred, even. Cheap and sleazy this may be but it's a great film for a bad movie night and with a spiffy new HD remaster this 88 Films Blu-ray is a must for zombie fans. **AB.**

MARTYRS (2015) DVD**Out Now. Altitude Films.****Certificate: 18.**

★★

Pascal Laugier's *Martyrs* (2008) was an unrelenting experience, a magnum opus of suffering, brutality and, above all, pain. This was a film that genuinely shocked, not only through the acute violence, both unforeseen and sustained, but because it had philosophy. It showed that an experience of endured cruelty could be transcendent, its spectacle both abject and ecstatic, mortifying yet intensely alive. It was perhaps the closest thing to a cinematic articulation of the aesthetics explored by Antonin Artaud, who went insane striving to achieve a purity of metaphysical terror in the theatre that he practiced. And so to the American remake, which also brims with dangerous philosophy: that of conservative, conscientious instruction.

For those unfamiliar with the premise, it focuses on two orphaned friends, Anna and Lucie, the latter of whom underwent horrific, seemingly commodified abuse as a young child. Ten years later, Lucie believes she has found some of the perpetrators and contacts Anna to verify that her suspicions, and retribution, are not just traumatised fantasy. To say more would be unscrupulous, as *Martyrs*, in both forms, rubbernecks unexpectedly: if coming to this version as



the first incarnation, it would be churlish to at least deny an element of surprise.

Working from a screenplay by Mark L. Smith, recently chewing the screen with his grizzled adaptation of *The Revenant*, directing brothers Kevin and Michael Goetz founder in visualising a consciously compromised script. Significantly tamer than the original, there is no sense of ordeal,

the shock of an interrupted breakfast sterilised by stylised augmentation, either digitally erupting blood or cascading feathers shot out of a duvet: similarly, the manifestation of Lucie's psychosis is too coy.

For Laugier, the suffering undergone by his protagonists was inescapably externalised, and experienced alone. The shift in the remake is to filter understanding through the more balanced Anna, who, even as a child, could never unwaveringly believe that the monsters her friend spoke about were real. Any doubt that character had in the original was laid to rest at great expense, but here the function of Anna is to safeguard from any direct perception of anguish: she is the conduit to apprehend Lucie's story, and devotion, for a PG-13 audience, and act as their vindicator when she turns avenging angel in the final reel.

If Laugier's *Martyrs* comes close to a spiritual experience, albeit a horrifyingly contrary one, this new adaptation could be seen to be something altogether more religious with its adversity founded on hope, charity and solidarity. And that is its problem. Sanitised for mainstream sensibility and plying doctrinal obedience. This *Martyrs* is an unrelenting experience for all the wrong reasons.

Extras: Cursory behind the scenes with many struggling to define what the film is, shit being the obvious answer. Trailer. **JK.**

BASKET CASE THE TRILOGY (1982)
Out Now. Second Sight. Certificate: 18.
 ★★★★★

All three of Frank Henenlotter's grotesque freakshow movies have been gathered together in one basket, er, box set, starting with the first and best *Basket Case*, a movie that was a big hit for Palace Video back in their *Evil Dead* days.

"The Tenant In Room 7 Is Very Small, Very Twisted, and Very Mad." No kidding. *Basket Case* is a no-budgetter, but fun most of the way thanks to an inventive script and direction by fan-turned-filmmaker Frank Henenlotter. Kevin Van Hentenryck plays Duane Bradley, a disturbed young man who checks into a sleazy Times Square hotel with his deformed brother Belial (who lives in a medium size wicker basket and eats hamburgers voraciously). The monstrous freak wants revenge on the doctors who threw him in a dustbin at birth, and he gets it in a gruesome fashion using their own scalpels to chop them to pieces. When his brother takes home a normal girlfriend he chops her to pieces as well. The film's cheapness shows through in the grainy 16mm photography and some inept animation of Belial (in one scene he looks like a lump of plasticine that has been moved none too cleverly from frame to frame). But the characters are quirky and interesting (particularly Robert Vogel's sleazy hotel owner) and there is enough sheer perverseness in the tale to make it a must-see.

Basket Case 2 didn't come along until 1990, but this belated sequel is a bigger budget production that finds Belial and Duane as guests of the weird Granny Ruth (played by legendary jazz singer Annie Ross), whose home in Staten Island is a refuge for some of



the oddest putty-faced freaks you have ever seen. (Make-up artist Gabe Bartalos seems to have overdosed on re-runs of *The Elephant Man*). Their idyllic lifestyle is interrupted by the appearance of nosy reporter Kathryn Meisle and her photographer assistant Matt Mittler, and it all ends with an over-the-top bloodbath that is far too ridiculous to be taken seriously. The best scene has Belial making love to Eve, a similarly grotesque Siamese twin. Supposedly conceived as a homage to Tod Browning's *Freaks*, this is not funny, cruel or original enough, and the freaks are just too way out to be scary.

The law of diminishing returns comes into play with *Basket Case 3: The Progeny* (1992). Lots of flashbacks to previous entries are used to pad out a careless narrative which finds the freaks going on a bus trip to Georgia to stay with Uncle Hal (Dan Biggers), the only doctor capable of delivering the monstrous Eve's mutant babies. A crooked sheriff tries to kidnap the misshapen sprogs, and the usual round of bloodthirsty revenge follows, with Belial adopting a *Terminator*-type stance. The grotesque birth scene is a highlight (talk about getting a quart out of a pint pot!), but Henenlotter lades on the weirdness so heavily that it all gets a little tiresome. Tina Louise Hibbert is a discovery as the sheriff's sexy daughter. But somebody should have taken away Gabe Bartalos' plasticine set. For our US readers, this is region free. The image looks good but betrays the cheapness of the production values, especially on the first film.

Extras: What's in the basket? A look at the making of the trilogy

with director Frank Henenlotter, actors Kevin VanHentenryck, Beverly Bonner, Annie Ross, producers Edgar levans and James Glickensbaas, make-up effects artists John Caglione Jr, Kevin Haney, Gabe Bartalos and writer Uncle Bob Martin. Interview with Graham Humphreys, who did the famous VHS poster art for Palace Video.

Video Introduction and audio commentary by director Frank Henenlotter, producer Edgar levins and actress Beverly Bonner. Outtakes and Behind The Scenes, 2001 Video Short - *The Hotel Broslin*. Trailers and radio spots, photo gallery. **AB.**

LANDMINE GOES CLICK (2015) VOD
Out Now. FrightFest Presents.
Certificate: 18.
 ★★

Shutter goes click. Being framed by a local guide for a group memento, an American tourist steps on something else that goes click. But it is no accident, Chris having been set up by his best friend Dan, working in cahoots with the casual photographer. He has slept with Dan's fiancée Alicia, this pre-marital trip to a remote part of Georgia providing the perfect opportunity for vengeance. Dan leaves the cheating couple for dead until they are chanced upon by someone out walking his dog.

Initially, the suspicions of this man, Ilya, toward these hapless Americans have a seriocomic aspect, pelting Chris with rocks as he knows this region is not known for landmines, or believing the trench Alicia is digging to be a grave for any who fall foul of this seeming con. As he realises this is no joke, his help comes at a price, demands for a certain type of cultural exchange rising as the situation becomes increasingly desperate.

Landmine Goes Click is a rape-revenge

thriller of two halves that make for an unpleasant whole. The shifting power



dynamics caused by the central dilemma sustain mild tension, fluid camerawork mobilising amongst this uneasy threesome in the grey dampness of the booby-trapped clearing, serving to underline Chris' static impotence, until it all terminates in a nasty act of premeditation worsened by a violently sudden twist of fate. The psychic fall-out of the second half amplifies this deed with a gratuitous spitefulness wholly out of character for the way the protagonist has hitherto been developed.

Perhaps director Levan Bakhia is making a point about the precipitous reality behind fantasised contrivance. An opening aerial shot following a jeep going into the mountains begins as a model landscape before subtly morphing into its full-sized counterpart: Ilya will later chastise Chris for his assumptions about landmines learned from Hollywood. Yet if the thrust of the movie is to teach lessons about the indiscriminate ugliness of conflict and its post-traumatic legacy, the convenience of its narrative symmetry acts as sabotage.

Firing pin goes click. Bakhia's film blows up in his face.

Extras: None. **JK.**

MARK OF THE WITCH (2014) DVD
Out Now. Metrodome. Certificate: 18.
 ★★★★★

Also known as *Another*, Jason Bognacki's beguiling art-horror has been retitled for UK distribution as *Mark Of The Witch*. Anyone expecting cheap, exploitative occultism is in for a surprise, for this hallucinatory hedonism mixes Greek mythology with fairy-tale perversion.

On her eighteenth birthday, Jordyn (Paulie Rojas) makes a wish: to know her mother, who died on the advent of her coming into being. All is fittingly jolly until Aunt Ruth (Nancy Wolfe), who raised her as a child, grabs a knife and plunges it in her stomach, cryptically howling the words, "It's time!"

Shortly after, Jordyn is visited at the late-night pharmacy where she works by a grotesque woman in a black, hooded cloak (Maria Olsen, a sort of female Lon Chaney without make-up), who scratches her forearm to draw blood. Then things get increasingly weird, Jordyn waking up in strange places not knowing how she got there, taunted by snatches of increasingly depraved behaviour that she may have indulged in. The witch is laying siege to her soul, but is it a ritual of destruction or one of ancestral union?

Bognacki uses everything at his disposal to create the illusion of waking dream: saturated colour, elastic frame speed,



weightless angles. The camera drifts across from the witch peering into her burnished looking glass to Jordyn doing the same, the image in perfect, kaleidoscopic symmetry. Similarly, she will appear grimacing malevolently on CCTV screens before a wash of static replaces it with the confused face of the ingénue, two women being pulled into the same plane of representation.

To stop this impious coupling though, Aunt Ruth is on hand as a God-fearing advocate of light, engaging in wrist-flicked fireball duels with her infernal sister to save

her niece from consummation: the film is not without frivolous humour.

Mark Of The Witch is a supernatural variant on the three Fates mythos, each female representing life, destiny and death, and at different stages of beauty, wisdom and influence.

Jordyn is callow and demure, hiding in the closet as her best mate cheats on her with her boyfriend, experiencing the orgasm vicariously yet holding her hand aloft in caution, perhaps frightened at the power of sex, in one of the film's boldest and brilliant scenes.

To come truly of age and learn how to wield that potential, she must be seduced by the wanton fascination that the witch represents. Yet the wizened Aunt Ruth has learnt for herself that absolute power corrupts absolutely, but can only give heed to her young niece. If this all sounds heavy, the ravishing stylistic luridness is as seductive as Argento at his best.

As the film tumbles into a sempiternal fugue of voluptuous ascension, chthonian genesis and blood-soaked communion, *Mark Of The Witch* signals itself as one of the most distinctive genre puzzles of recent years. Bewitching.

Extras: Brief but philosophical *Behind The Scenes* with thoughtful contributions from Bognacki and all three leads, Olsen particularly lucid: she is rapidly becoming a grande dame of independent horror. **JK.**

THE GREEN INFERNO (2013) DVD/
BLU-RAY Out Now.
Entertainment One.
Certificate: 18.

★★★

Eli Roth is something of an anti-tourist. His calling-card feature, *Hostel*, chastised a pair of affluent, suburban American backpackers for seeking out a Slovakian hotel where they believed their sexual fantasies could be indulged. His latest similarly castigates yuppie college kids out to polish their street cred, this time a bunch of wannabe activists intent on raising awareness of Amazonian deforestation: as newest recruit Justine (Lorenza Izzo) comments with little percipience, "The only thing those posers care about is looking like they care."

For its first half, *The Green Inferno* is a crass, caricature-driven satire on privilege and self-serving slacktivism. Some moan that hunger strikes are used to excuse anorexia, others that purveyors of protest songs should be gassed for early morning strumming. The stunt that this troped troupe (moronic stoner, emo lesbian, prissy vegan etc.) venture into the jungle to perform swings a jibe at the ubiquitous Anonymous movement: instead of Guy Fawkes visages, neutral masks are donned as they chain themselves to trees in front of oncoming bulldozers, filming all on their mobile phones and buzzing at their newfound celebrity when retweeted worldwide.



After an impressively realised plane crash downs them all in the depths of the leafy conflagration, a passing tribe, mistaking them for employees of the corporations ravaging their habitat, take the group to their village for a meat-munching feast of sensational

execution and questionable taste. Eyes and tongues are gouged, torsos stripped of limbs, and living flesh devoured from bone until the fate of final girl Justine's genitals is left to be decided. Yet there is a bridled gloss to this enthusiastic gratuity, never reaching the grungy, full-frontal apocalypse of *Cannibal Holocaust*, a film Roth is so earnestly trying to emulate.

Either way, this swamps any satirical chomp, the characters descending into scatological cartoons, defecating or masturbating to provide vulgar relief. Only the aftermath of a dope-laced dinner nips an irreverent vein of humour: it gives new meaning to the phrase 'having the munchies.'

Roth has courted controversy for his depiction of indigenous natives not only as wholesale cannibals, but body-painted, bone-pierced, redoubtable savages. Yet they are undeniably more heroic than the covetous Westerners, who exploit their image in a form of hipster colonialism borne out of vain affectation and poised outrage.

And that is Eli Roth. Less an anti-tourist, more a participative one.

Extras: Commentary with Roth, producer Nicolás López, Izzo and other cast members, that comes across as a frat-pack love-in with shared stories of on-set diarrhoea, although it is amusing to note that when the village was shown *Cannibal Holocaust*, they thought it a comedy. **JK.**

PANDORICA (2016) DIGITAL
Out Now. The Film Label.
Certificate: 15.



You can guess what you are in for with a movie that boasts that it was shot in a Paintball location in Billericay. This stands in for a forest on a planet that could be ours in the future following something called The Great Reset, which obliterated everyone except for a tribe called the Varosha. When each generation comes of age, three are chosen to undergo a trial in the woods from which only one can emerge victorious, their destiny to lead the paintball henceforth.

The mulleted, face-painted LARPer, looking not unlike a New Romantic tribute band, comprise of feisty orphan Eiren, selfish weasel Ares and dithering oaf Thade, who manages to injure himself within seconds of entering the thicket. Their task reveals itself as a woman fleeing some mask-wearing



men, who want the mysterious box back that she has stolen from them. It is said to contain authoritarian power: she wants to chuck it in a lake.

Quandaries abound like a Ladybird guide to adolescence: should they follow the path of their elder or make their own way? Help the afflicted or fend for oneself? Yield to the temptation of a notorious woman's box? Ares and Eiren squabble lots, Thade veers between their intents like a stuck piggy-in-the-middle, and Billericay's fancy-dress shop profits tidily in selling *Predator* masks to a few lumpen extras.

As elder Nus says early on to patent heroine Eiren that this is an easy competition, *Pandorica* could do well to pay heed. With its join-the-dot plotting, facile characterisation and dubstep-announced threat of a mini-franchise, I would be surprised if there's a worse film out this year.

Extras: None on online screener. **JK.**



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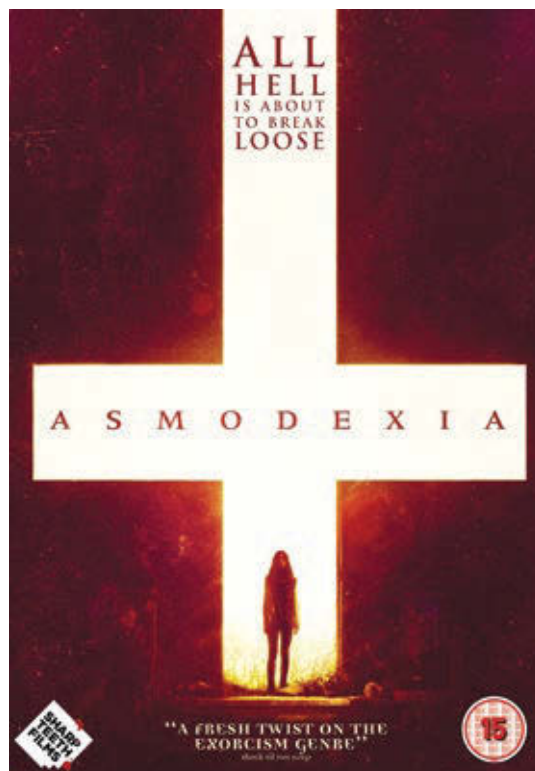
ASMODEXIA (2014) DVD
Out Now. Sharp Teeth Films.
Certificate: 18.



An ageing, Bible-thumping man, Eloy, sits with his granddaughter Alba in a barren field on the outskirts of Barcelona discussing the meaning of their names: 'man' and 'dawn' respectively. A title having just informed us that it is three days before the resurrection, these characters become loaded with symbolic function although, as will increasingly become apparent, all may not appear as it first seems.

They are ostensibly travelling exorcists, Alba possessed of a supernatural power to cast out spiritual pique as Eloy accompanies with brimstone dogma. They have a few stricken souls to attend to before greeting the new order and are pursued from afar by a mysterious figure in a black van. Meanwhile, all hell is breaking loose in an inner-city asylum with inmates being hijacked by unnatural spirits, cautiously observed by Ona, who was sectioned fifteen years prior for predicting such baneful occurrence. Her sister Diana is also tracking the landscape, investigating the progressively violent occultism of hyper-religious sects taking their cue from ancient tribes like the Mayans, whose 21/12/2012 doomsdate is only three days away.

In keeping with its position in the exorcism subgenre, *Asmodexia* is a head-spinning, back-arching contortion of a film, full of false countenance and insurgent prophecy. Such



is the ambiguity of the script, co-written by director Marc Carreté and Mike Hostench, that it is difficult to orient oneself amongst those who represent the force of good and those the legion of evil in this fevered wasteland. With the exception of the named characters, everyone looks diseased or cadaverous,

either in the sepia-burnished haze of deserted exteriors (this festive period is unusually warm) or the dank aquamarine of the seemingly subterranean madhouse populated almost exclusively by women.

Traditionally, the victims of possession movies are gendered as female, histrionic haridans or volatile girls in the throes of adolescence upsetting the peace. Eloy tells Alba a campfire tale about a terrible graveyard disturbance that occurred in the town where he grew up following the burial of the local priest. When he was eventually disinterred, ceasing the undead turmoil, a woman's body was discovered, having masqueraded as the community patriarch for many years: "Even the resting souls rebelled against that abomination when they were forced to share the sacred ground with her." And the sinister, promiscuous cult that will come to link all the protagonists was one riddled with sexualised abuse, the paternity of its offspring wildly disputed. But through the figure of Alba, something very radical might be about to happen (and has already according to the timeline of the film), her exorcising one of the afflicted with a warning that "retaining the semen will only poison you."

Asmodexia ends with a striking image of inversion, the camera gliding subversively to turn orthodoxy on its head. This is no longer the dawn of man, but one of enlightenment. It's all in her name.

Extras: None on review copy. **JK.**

DVD Short Notices



THE UNFOLDING (2015) VOD

Out Now. Label: FrightFest Presents
Certificate: 15.

★★

In a planet that is on the brink of mutually assured destruction, what would be your final earthly desire? For the ghost-hunting couple at the centre of *The Unfolding*, it would appear to be to prove the existence of a haunted house.

Rigging up the usual cameras around an isolated Gothic mansion in the middle of nowhere, paranormal activity dutifully increases as nerves fray thinner. Is the house acting as a "psychic beacon" in the face of impending apocalypse? Or is the uncertainty for mankind's future playing hopeful tricks on the mind?

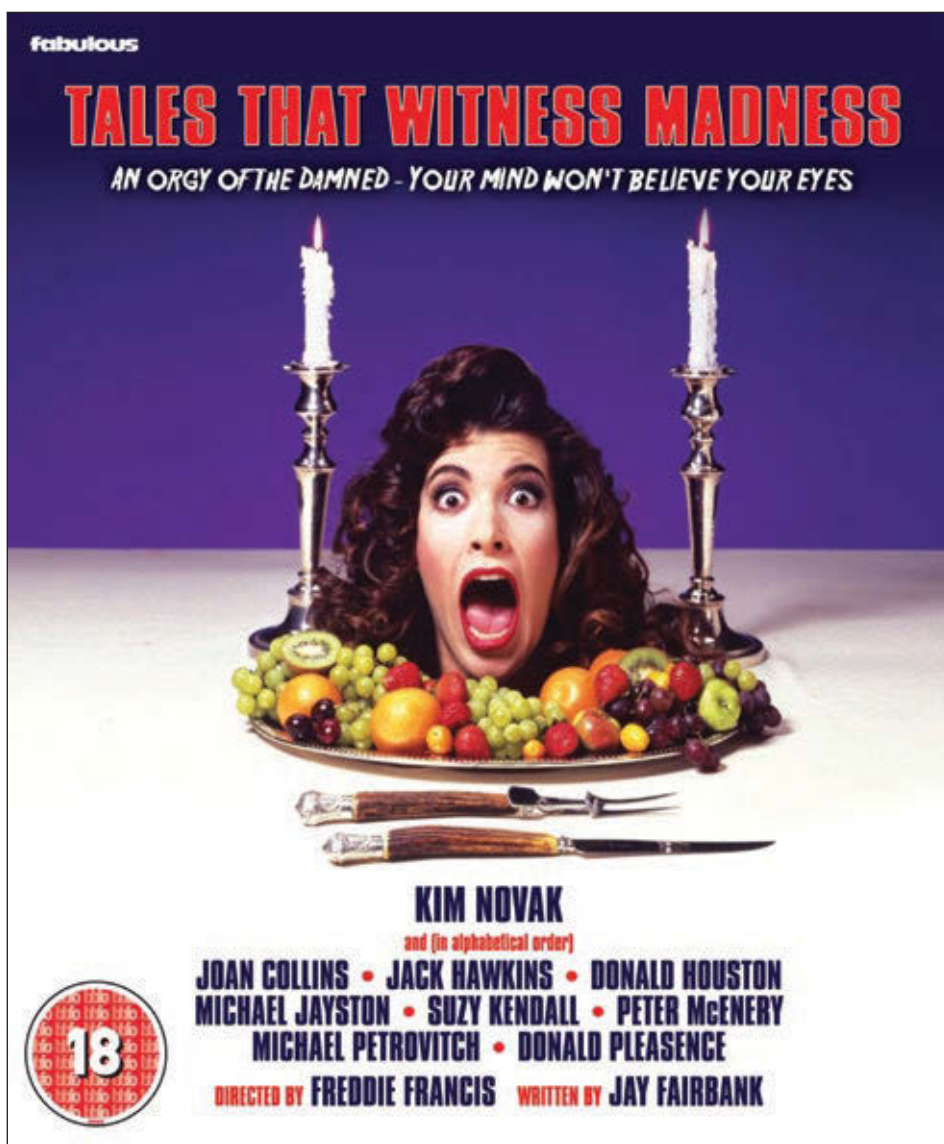
There is no denying the sense of fragile decrepitude, lingering cobwebs brushed by insects crawling on tarnished surfaces, in the almost monochrome despondency of the found footage. Yet atmosphere alone lacks substance. Similarly, the supernatural goings-on all occur off-screen, rooms discovered trashed as if by elusive rock stars, plants alleged to have moved of their own accord, and "grey shimmerings" reportedly seen. Oo-er.

Phantoms aside, it is most difficult not to question motivation: just why are these people pissing about holding séances when the world's about to go to hell in a handbasket?

"I will never leave this place," growls one medium-channelled ghoulie. There won't be much choice when the firestorm comes mate. Oh, wait. A portentous voiceover wonders if any part of a human being can operate outside time and space.

Such vapid metaphysics and misplaced romanticism make for a hollow haunting.

Extras: None. JK.



TALES THAT WITNESS MADNESS (1973)

Out Now. Fabulous Films. Certificate: 18.

★★

Written by actress Jennifer Jayne under the pseudonym of Jay Fairbank, this lacklustre compendium of chiller yarns plays more like a series of substandard *Twilight Zone* episodes than the enjoyable old Amicus movies of the 60s. It's set in a clinic run by Donald Pleasence where four of the inmates have far-fetched stories to tell.

In the first tale Russell Lewis is a young lad who is upset by his parents' constant fighting and invents an imaginary tiger to kill him - shades of Ray Bradbury's *Illustrated Man* story, *The Veldt*. In the second episode, Peter McEnery discovers he can travel through time with the aid of an old bicycle. He assumes the identity

of one of his Victorian-era relatives and is doomed to suffer the man's fate as well.

Joan Collins appears in the third story as a woman who gets into a life or death battle with a living tree - yes, it's as daft as it sounds. Then finally, fading film star Kim Novak plays a literally agent whose alluring daughter Mary Tamm is needed for a virgin sacrifice to help one of her clients. In fact Rita Hayworth was originally hired for the Novak part, but she dropped out after a few days. A very wise move, Rita.

This uninspired entry sadly marked the final screen appearance of the great Jack

Hawkins. A good cast is wasted, and it is indeed a sad reflection of the declining state of UK horror in the early-to-mid-70s. Decent HD transfer if you're a fan, but no extras. AB.



DVD Short Notices



THE ATOMIC SUBMARINE (1960) DVD.
Out Now. Screenbound. Certificate: PG.

★★★

The atomic sub Tiger Shark sails to the North Pole to investigate the disappearance of freight and passenger subs in the area and discovers they have been hijacked by an underwater flying saucer. Inside is a cyclops space monster on visible wires, who puts up quite a battle before the two-fisted naval heroes give it a monstrous shiner. The effects in this Richard Gordon-produced cheapie are a laugh, but the film takes too long in getting to them. Most of the mercifully short running time is made up of squabbles among the crew and stock footage of atomic subs (see if you can count how many times the sub passes the same iceberg). Someone should have put a bit of technical knowledge into the script, too: it refers to the magnetic and geographical North poles as being one and the same! A decent crew of B-movie stalwarts such as Arthur Franz, Dick Foran and Brett Halsey give it more believability than it deserves. Screenbound's bare bones release looks pretty decent. **AB.**

JOURNEY TO THE SEVENTH PLANET (1962) Blu-ray. Out Now. Kino Lorber.
Certificate: N/A.

★★★

Supposedly set in the year 2001, this colourful low-budget sci-fi adventure was filmed in a tiny 26 ft square studio in Sweden, and it's a tribute to the ingenuity of the effects men and set designers that it looks so impressive.

After we get past the dreadful opening theme song, we join a tired-looking John Agar as he leads a UN exploration team on an expedition to Uranus (no scatological jokes, please). There they find the planet is being controlled by a giant brain which feeds on their unconscious fears and desires, scaring one rodent-fearing crew member with giant rats and tormenting another, who is homesick, with visions of his home town. The plot and performances are nothing special, and half the actors appear to have been dubbed rather



badly, but other than a few slow spots it's a passable enough space odyssey which should appeal to the Saturday matinee crowd.

In fact when I first saw the movie as a child on a Sunday-only performance it was rated 'U' as suitable for kids, and that was because some bright spark had removed all of the scenes involving monsters and the giant brain that I had already seen pics of in *Famous Monsters of Filmland*. Boy was I disappointed.

Previously available on DVD as one of the MGM Midnite Movies releases, *Journey* gets an HD makeover here in its original 1.66:1 aspect ratio and generally looks great. The image has a pleasingly filmic feel and is very bright and colourful.

Extras: Commentary by genre expert Tim Lucas, who covers the film's troubled production history (AIP ordered new music, reshoots and extra special effects before releasing it in the USA). You also get trailers for *Donovan's Brain*, *The Magnetic Monster* and *Invisible Invaders*, which was formerly twinned with this on the Midnite Movies release. **AB.**

FROM OTHER WORLDS (2004) DVD.
Out Now. Simply Media. Certificate: 12.

★

There are two cinematic genres where success can be swiftly adjudged via an automatic reaction from the audience: comedy makes us laugh; horror prompts us to shiver, or even scream. Unfortunately, when presented with an allegedly quirky "sci-fi spoof" which is by turns confused, derivative, tedious and offers as many laughs as an Amish funeral service, it's clear you're on a losing spiral.

Writer-director Barry Strugatz may have scored with his screenplay for *Married to the Mob* (1988), but his debut as a feature director, *From Other Worlds* - a low-budget close encounter in which Brooklyn housewife Joanne (Cara Buono, currently appearing in *Stranger Things*) realises she holds the cosmic key to saving Planet Earth - fails at pretty much every hurdle.

To be fair, her performance is the sole

notable element in this soulless shambles, since the remainder of the cast gives every indication of having stepped straight out of AmDram. If our current society is indeed so dull and lifeless, maybe we should save time and embrace the Apocalypse.

Extras: None. **SG.**

SPASMO (1974) Blu-ray.
Out Now. 88 Films. Certificate: 18.

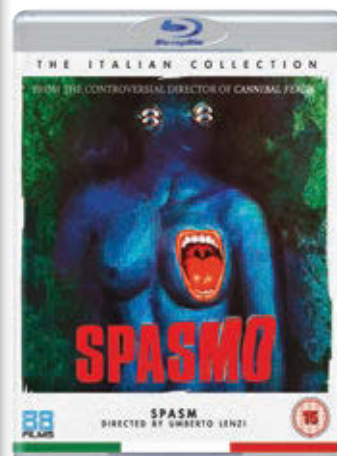
★★★

"I have a razor in my room... big sharp and sexy!" That's Suzy Kendall's idea of a chat-up line in this weird, convoluted Italian chiller. Even by the usual traditions of the giallo genre, Umberto Lenzi's *Spasmo* is an incredibly confusing effort. It stars Robert Hoffman, an actor so wooden that he needs varnishing, as the troubled hero. He comes across the fetching Miss Kendall (who was once married to cuddly Dudley Moore) lying on the beach pretending to be dead, and after he gets over this jolly jape the two become lovers. When a man breaks into Kendall's room, Hoffman shoots him dead. Then instead of going to the police, he and his mysterious lady pal go off to hide out in a deserted beach house.

"It's all so absurd... meaningless," sighs Hoffman at one point, and we're right with him on that. It all gets quite surreal at the end, with mannequins hanging from trees and Ennio Morricone's score going potty in the background.

Legend has it that George Romero was hired by the film's US distributor to shoot some extra gore scenes, but there's not much here to upset your granny. If you like giallo movies you'll probably get off on the cosy atmospherics of this production, and there's always the sight of Suzy Kendall in the height of Biba fashion to prevent you from hitting that fast forward. The Blu-ray looks good, with vibrant colours and accurate contrasts.

Extras: Alternate opening credits, English language trailer and an Umberto Lenzi Q & A (lasting about 25 minutes) from the 2013 Manchester Festival of Fantastic Films. **AB.**



**THE CANAL (2014) DVD.****Out Now. Kaleidoscope. Certificate: 18.**

★★★

Film archivist David (Rupert Evans) moves into a new house with his wife Alice (Hannah Hoekstra) and his young son. He suspects that his missus has been cheating on him with a work friend and then discovers that his new home was the setting for a brutal murder many years ago. When his wife goes missing the cops suspect that he has murdered her, but he thinks that a supernatural force may be at work. An obvious ripoff of the far superior *Sinister*, this rubbish movie wears out its welcome by about twenty minutes in, with lots of horrible fast-cut would-be scare scenes that are okay in the trailer but annoying in the film. Decently acted but poorly written, *The Canal* rips off *Ringu* big time in its final scenes involving a ghostly figure crawling out of an image projected on the wall. Though this scene does raise a few goosebumps it doesn't atone for the confused, yawn-inducing narrative as a whole. **AB.**

PIGS (1972) Blu-ray. Out Now. Vinegar Syndrome. Certificate: N/A.

★★★

Famed B-movie bad guy Marc Lawrence directed and stars in this pathetic cheapie, also released under the titles of *Daddy's Deadly Darlings*, *Love Exorcist*, *The Strange Exorcism of Lynn Hart* and *Blood Pen*. Under any title it's a waste of time, a dopey psycho-thriller starring Marc's real-life daughter Toni as a young murderess recently escaped from a loony bin who teams up with a crazed farmer to polish off troublesome trespassers. The bodies are fed to pigs the latter keeps penned up behind his establishment. There's not much gore on offer, and in fact it may have been intended as a comedy - a shame it didn't come off. As mentioned, this had many different titles and was revised more times than an election manifesto. This is the definitive Director's Cut and it's still shit, but at least it's shit approved by the director. Vinegar Syndrome have given the movie a decent looking transfer.

Extras: Audio interview with cinematographer Glenn Roland, on-camera chat with actress Toni Lawrence, in which she discusses her father's brush with the McCarthy blacklist, and a similar interview with composer Charles Bernstein, whose music is probably the most

**THE PACK (2014) DVD****Out Now. Arrow Films. Certificate: 15.**

★

This Australian film begins with a cautionary legend: "Around the world, packs of wild dogs roam freely, killing at will. Now they have developed the taste for a new prey." It sounds like the tagline from a trailer: unfortunately, the result has not been edited like one.

The Wilsons live on an isolated sheep farm. They are struggling to keep the wolf from the door, business being bad due to a six month spate of depleted livestock caused by feral predators. To make matters worse, an estate agent visits and offers them a foreclosure settlement that they cannot afford to decline. Surrounded on all sides by curs, their predicament becomes staggeringly literal over the course of one night.

Amongst its kind, *The Pack* is the crowned runt, stunted in breadth and of a contemptible length. The titular beast of Samuel Fuller's superlative *White Dog* was irrevocably conditioned for malicious attack: Kornél Mondruczó's recent *White God* depicted a mass canine rebellion against human insensitivity, made terrifyingly real by the lack of CG avatars. In director Nick Robertson's extended one-acter, the creatures' savagery is motiveless, refusing any fashionable 'imperilled nature' subtlety, and limited to all of six characters, four of whom are likely to survive and defend their property to prove the boo-hiss villain wrong.

His death at least provides brief visceral diversion, extreme close-ups of maws grasping at throat intercut with slow-mo, teeth-baring snarls. For the rest of the picture, action is limited to running away from doggies, doggies woofing into raised arms, and doggies padding around interminably looking for something to do in the absence of a good meal. *The Pack* has certainly developed a new taste for prey. That of thrill-seekers everywhere.

Extras: Five minute *Making Of* that illustrates how the practical use of attack dogs was interspersed with creation of CG effects. **JK.**

**EMELIE (2015) DVD****Out Now. FrightFest Presents/Icon Entertainment. Certificate: 15.**

★★★

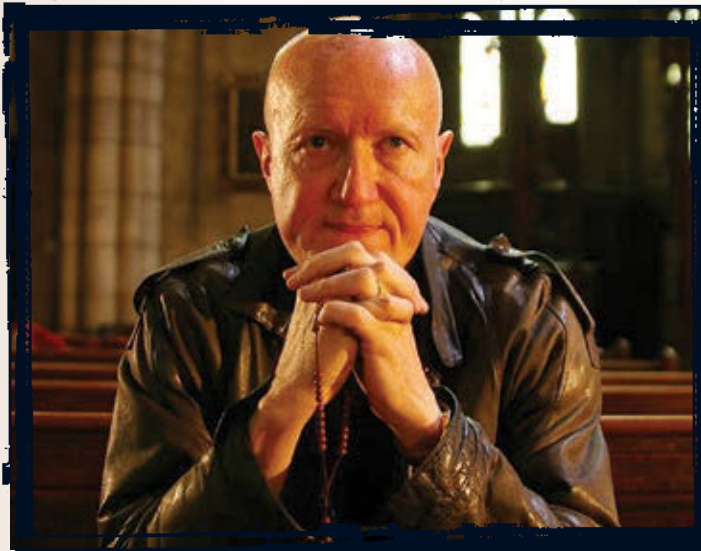
Amélie was a naïve ingénue with a distinct sense of justice, helping those around her fulfil their dreams whilst neglecting her own. *Emelie* has an integrity very much her own, yet is the polar opposite to her partial namesake. She is a variant of the babysitter-from-hell, drafted in at the last minute after the regular one cancels. The parents have little choice but to leave their three kids in this stranger's hands: it's their wedding anniversary and, after all, she did come with recommendation. Just not the one from her psychiatrist. It doesn't take long before she wins her charges over, inviting them to do what isn't allowed: play violent videogames, tear apart expensive cushions, eat as many cookies as they desire. But then the play-acting begins to take a more sinister turn toward the forbidden, encouragement given to microwave pets or assault one's relatives.

Emelie undoubtedly has scenes of meticulous awkwardness, often directed at the pre-pubescent Jacob, the eldest of the clan: in a game of hide-and-seek, she connives for him to discover her on the toilet, emasculating this proxy man of the house; when Emelie screens their parents' home movies, Jacob blocks the television, seen as a spoilsport by his four year-old brother Christopher whilst his sister looks on ashamed, tacitly let down that he did not intervene earlier. With the sibling unit thus undermined, Emelie has better access to groom her intended target. Yet the unease is somewhat restrained, never quite breaking out into the cruelty that the film posits Emelie as being capable of. Sarah Bolger plays the role with a troubled detachment, but remains too much of an enigma: only one scene, where she faces a potentially loaded gun wielded by a playful Christopher, hints at a dangerous, infective nihilism to the character.

With the final third moving to *Home Alone* territory, with the resourceful Jacob finding means to save the family, *Emelie* strays further from the dark suggestiveness that initially made director Michael Thelin's feature debut less a thriller of home invasion, but more one of a home inveigling. In the end, it plays as stable and safe as its partial namesake.

Extras: Introduction with Paul McEvoy and Alan Jones. **JK.**

FRIGHTMARES IN A DAMAGED BRAIN



He's been described as *'The Witchfinder General Of The Internet'* and (his favourite) *'The Truffaut of Smut'*. According to The Hampstead & Highgate Express, he "has contributed more than most to the degeneration of British cinema". He's David McGillivray, and John Martin has a great interview with him!

H

e's naughty by nature (an authority on *Doing Rude Things*) and a certified mischief maker. He's written for Pete Walker, Norman J Warren and a rogues' gallery of exploitation directors. Now he's back writing, producing and acting in the portmanteau horror effort *Worst Fears*, an upcoming DVD release from Nucleus Films. He's a national treasure to those of us who treasure "terror pictures", sleaze and exploitation. That CBE must be on its way soon to the one and only David McGillivray.

David, I thought I'd start by asking you about the problems you're currently having with The Gielgud Trust...

Well, I didn't expect that! (laughs). Are *Dark Side* readers really interested in this? If so, they can find out everything they need to know on my social media pages and the dedicated *Trouser Bar* pages. I don't want your money, only your support.

David, I spend my time writing about horror movies. I don't have any money!

Well, we're going to get on fine, then.

You've obviously got my support.

Thank you. I do not know what this year is going to bring. I could be a superstar, I could be in jail! "Exciting" is one way of describing the situation, but I could do without it.

Going back to more *Dark Sidey* stuff then, I gather that your inspiration for getting into The Biz was a hybrid of Hollywood Musicals and '50s American monster movies.

That's fair, yes, an odd combination, but it worked out for me.

You started as an extra in various movies including *Cromwell*, *Julius Caesar* (with Gielgud in the title role) and *Michael Winner's*

***The Games*. Was working on a *Winner* set, however briefly, good preparation for working with Pete Walker?**

The Games was my first film and it was clear that *Winner* was bad tempered, yes. I didn't know much about him before working on it. I did like his early films very much. He went downhill pretty rapidly and then got the reputation, which we all know, for being an absolute bastard. I was just there, fascinated, at the old White City Stadium, watching for the first time how a real film was made and I absolutely loved it.

Presumably extras didn't get paid that much. Then you started writing about movies for *The Monthly Film Bulletin* and *Time Out*.

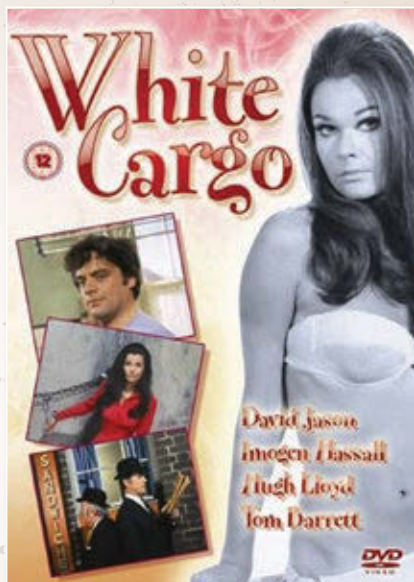
I discovered fairly early on that I wasn't going to be the film star that I wanted to be, and that being a film extra wasn't the route to that, anyway. As you say, in those days it wasn't particularly well paid either. I'd always been interested in the history of film and began writing about it almost as soon as I left school. In those days it was possible to make a living out of being a film writer. It isn't today, obviously...

Tell me about it...

These days people write for nothing but back then there were so many magazines, which didn't pay well but if you wrote for enough of them you could make a living. That's what I started doing, then I was told that I ought to apply for the post of assistant editor of *The Monthly Film Bulletin*, which I got in 1971.

At the time you applied for that post, did you already have this track record of writing about the more exploitative, disreputable stuff?

Er... yes, I would say so. I never turned my nose up when I was offered the films that nobody else wanted to review. In those days, it was very difficult to get people to review the exploitation films, of which there were plenty of new ones every week. The majority of the MFB reviewers only wanted to review Hungarian masterpieces so I was like Charlie in the chocolate factory, I was very happy to go



and see these film for free, for which I would otherwise have bought tickets.

Wasn't your employment there ultimately terminated because of this preference for exploitative movies?

It was indeed. I had written a very unseemly piece for *Films And Filming*, which I seem to recall was the first British article about the hardcore industry. It had kicked off in America and we knew very little about it over here, but the *Films And Filming* correspondent Peter Buckley went to the States and wrote an article about hard core porn, to which the editor of *F&F* asked me to write an introduction, explaining the difference between the situation in America and things as they were here. Obviously hard porn was banned over here and what we called porn was softcore, so I explained that difference, and when that issue of *F&F* came out, Penelope Houston (who died just last year) came into the *MFB* office and told me that my services were no longer required.

What, you were sacked just for writing that in America you can see penetration and money shots?

It was for associating myself with a magazine that already had a reputation... *F&F* was notorious for its covers but there I was, writing under my own name about pornography and in those days this just wasn't done at the British Film Institute. Things were changing and I like to think that I introduced the rot which destroyed the BFI, but things weren't moving sufficiently fast in this days for me to remain in employment there.

You've reminded me of some of the descriptions that have been made of you and of which I assume you approve... 'The Witchfinder General of the internet' and of course, 'The Truffaut of Smut.'

'Truffaut of Smut' I love. That one was coined by Mathew Sweet on Radio 3 and I remember telling him that now I'd heard it, I could die happy...

Is it still possible to see the notorious, suppressed *Man Alive* documentary



on sexploitation cinema in which you participated?

There was a program about that on Radio 4 last year and I was in it. I'm not sure if it's on iPlayer still, it might have disappeared. Simon Farquhar, another Facebook friend, found that episode so yes, it is still available and there are extracts from it on this very interesting radio programme about how ground breaking *Man Alive* was, how they were always looking for the kind of stories that nobody else would tell. So this subject was right up their street, the fact that films with sex and violence were not only popular (this was about 1974), they were very big business. Some people were making a lot of money out of them, and other people were getting concerned about this.

Of course that was the backlash, yes, the fact that every cinema was showing "these terrible films" and there were complaints, yes. As far as I know though, *Man Alive* is not available on-line and you shouldn't trust any site that says it is. I haven't see it since it went out but it was a BBC programme and Simon obviously saw it on BBC premises.

The *Man Alive* episode was part of the inspiration for your book *Doing Rude Things*. It also dramatically changed the career of James Kenelm Clarke...

Oh, what a great story!

He was lured to the dark side while making it, wasn't he?

Yes, I love that. I mean who could have predicted that?

It's like the moment in that film *The Bader Meinhof Complex*, where Ulrika Meinhof is reporting on the Red Army Faction (sic) and she just crosses the line and joins them.

Yes, and something very similar happened with James Kenelm Clarke, a very distinguished documentary maker who, because of the people he met on that programme (which I think was called



'Xploitation'), immediately went off and started making his own exploitation films. All true. I have to tell you how much I enjoyed *Doing Rude Things* but I think that it only scratched the surface of what you know about this subject. I've often wondered whether there'll ever be a new, expanded edition.

It did scratch the surface because I didn't know as much as the younger people who were reading the book knew! This is how it must always be, because the next generation can always expand on what the previous generation has discovered. My publisher, who is no longer a publisher, isn't the slightest bit interested in "reviving the past" as he says, so no... there will never be another edition of *Doing Rude Things*. Indeed, why should there be? There are so many other books out now, not to mention the blogs, which are far more detailed. You probably know the guy called Gav Crimson, to whom I tip my hat. He's taken my crown (not wanting to mix metaphors)...

I could imagine somebody like Harvey Fenton publishing a really nice, updated edition of *Doing Rude Things*...

Well, I have a feeling it's not going to happen, but thank you for your support.

So, reviewing exploitation films got you sacked from the MFB but it got you an introduction to Pete Walker. Which came first, interviewing Walker or being recommended to him by Ray Selfe? I'm a little unclear on the exact chronology here.

I'd kept up my freelance journalism while I was working at the BFI and had already interviewed Pete Walker so then it was just a case of everything fitting into place, you know? I happened to have been fired so I happened to be available to write Ray Selfe's film *White Cargo* and then (I'm a bit unsure of the dates, too), within a short time he'd recommended me to Walker for *House Of Whipcord* and I started on that... and I never went back to work, as it were. I always say that I've already passed retirement age

Above and above left: David wrote some very "unseemly" pieces for the late, lamented *Films And Filming* back in the day. Can you believe covers like this ever adorned the shelves in newsagents? David also wrote the screenplay for the 1973 sex comedy *White Cargo*, an early starring role for David Jason





Above: David worked on a lot of Pete Walker movies, not actually *The Comeback* (1978), but we love the gory pic nevertheless!

Above right: A body in a car boot in Pete Walker's *Frightmare* (1974)



and I keep thinking to myself, I really must get a job. That's what we were brought up to believe when I was a kid, that you have to have a steady job, and I haven't had one since 1971!

Can't fault you. During *White Cargo*, was it apparent to you that David Jason would become, at least in domestic terms, as big a star as he did?

Hm... he was already Ronnie Barker's stooge and he was obviously a man of talent but did he have what it took to become a leading man? No, I wouldn't have thought anybody was sure about that, but I reckon he knew what he wanted and was happy to do anything to progress his own career. *White Cargo* must have seemed like a good idea but he pretty soon changed his mind about that. I remember he was demanding to have his name taken off the credits even when he was watching the rushes which is quite absurd, of course it wasn't a happy experience and I never spoke to him again (laughs)!

People often say that Martin Campbell's *Eskimo Nell*, written by Michael Armstrong, really captures the whole milieu of the British soft-core sex film.

Well, I'm on record and I might have been the first to say that *Eskimo Nell* was one of the best soft core porn films ever made in Britain...

Oh, it's fantastic...

It's true, and I think Michael Armstrong has said that he based the characters on people he had worked with. We can guess who he's referring to, but the film is a comedy and a huge exaggeration of the way things were, so the answer to your question is really no, I don't think it's a reflection of the way the British porn industry worked. It's a satire.

88 Films recently released *Eskimo Nell* on Blu-ray but it died a death.

Oh no! That's surprising, because I'm led to believe that there is this huge interest in the past and in particular, in British films of this period but when it comes to paying cold hard cash, it seems that this might not actually be true.

Yeah, you said in *Doing Rude Things* that these film would disappear and there'd be no demand to revive them again. Nigel Wingrove subsequently put a bunch of them out on video. Odeon (now Screenbound) released some of them

on DVD and now there's that 88 release, though I have noticed a lot of these discs starting to turn up in the bargain bins.

Another presumption you asserted in *Doing Rude Things* - and it was a reasonable one to make at that time - was that the British establishment would never tolerate hardcore, but that's not quite how things turned out.

I was recently listening to a programme on the radio and somebody was talking about the fact that once a law is passed, people's attitudes change. I think the programme might have been about gay marriage because it's remarkable how people who had been walking the streets with banners one minute, then meekly accepted everything and of course even the Church has changed its mind... so the idea was that after a law has been passed, people accept these changes.

They become "the new normal."

I think that's what happened when they had that famous judicial review in 2000. A judge decided that the BBFC had to pass hardcore porn. Now we're 15 years down the line and none of the dire predictions of social collapse have come to pass, just as I'd always argued, some of us knew that this wouldn't be the case but it seems we have to have laws first to tell people what to think.

Has the censorship battle largely moved to the internet now, is that where it's all kicking off?

Yes and it will never stop. This has been a hobby horse of mine right from the beginning, I suppose from the day I started work I've always been fighting authority. I even edited an anti-censorship magazine.

Yeah, *Scapegoat*, for our own Allan Bryce.

The aim of that magazine was, as you know, to dismantle all censorship, which of course is quite ridiculous! Like the poor, it will be always be with us and as you say, it's now moved to the internet. Every day the newspapers print more and more about censorship of the internet. I personally think that's not possible but some people like to believe that things are out of control and that, because of the internet, all children are being turned into monsters, whereas my belief is that nothing, essentially, is any different. They're just seeing on the internet what we were trying to get hold of in dirty book shops! It was just that much more difficult in those days! (laughs).

Perhaps this is an example of how the respectable and disreputable were rubbing shoulders in the British film industry. When you started working on the screenplay for *House Of Whiplash*, Alfred Shaughnessy - the script editor on smash TV hit *Upstairs, Downstairs* - had attempted a previous draft.

Yes, I would imagine that the TV gig paid a little more than he was getting from Walker. I think they'd worked on the concept together and there were a few pages that Shaughnessy had written but then he abandoned the project and that was how I got the job.

Did it already have the silly character names? "Walker", "Bates"... and of course, "Mark E. Dessart"!

Yes, it did and I was particularly interested in this, in the fact that one of the lesbian warders was named "Walker." I never found out how this came about, whether it was Alfred Shaughnessy poking fun at his employer or Pete Walker doing it himself. He did poke fun at himself, to be fair, he turned up in small parts in his films.

Clearly he could do that, but he was also capable of being a very testy, defensive sort of person, wasn't he?

Oh gosh (laughs) yes! Ultimately that's why we fell out. I pointed this out to him (laughs) and he didn't like the critical things I wrote about him. I've always called him The Boss as far as exploitation was concerned. I still stand by that, I think he was the most talented British exploitation director but I think he had his faults as well, but Pete Walker would not accept them.

The only time I ever met him, and this was where I was introduced to you, as well, was at one of Manchester's Festival Of Fantastic Films, back in the '90s. I had been forewarned that Walker could be difficult and that's exactly how I found him, a very acerbic person. Perhaps there were some feelings of insecurity there.

Well, insecurity must be at the bottom of it.

Maybe that particular occasion was difficult for him.

Well, that was the last time I saw him so we're talking more than 20 years ago. I really didn't like that occasion at all. I was partly to blame because I deliberately turned up late. I don't know, the devil must have got into me. I was round the corner with my then publisher and I knew what I

was doing, I think I wanted to exert some kind of control, that must have been at the back of my mind. When I finally turned up Walker was very annoyed and that's how we started off, and the onstage interviews were just dreadful! I asked my publisher afterwards: "Was that as bad as I thought it was?" and he said: "Yes, it was!"

Walker's often been described as a mischief maker but I think you are, too. Is it a case of "this town ain't big enough for two mischief makers"?

Mmm... yes I think we were and that's why, for a short period of time, we got on very well. The first two films were unalloyed joy. There I was writing screenplays and I'd never intended that this would happen, I thought, I'm sure like most kids today think: "Well how can I how can I get in the business?" It was difficult then and it's impossible now, but suddenly this had just been thrown into my lap and I hadn't really worked for it, so it was such a dream, yes. Having read a lot of film books, I thought my script would be rewritten by somebody else but I found myself working with a man who didn't alter my scripts at all. Obviously in the exploitation business everything was done really, really fast and cheaply. So I was the right man at the right time, I could write very fast. I don't know how long *Whipcord* took, maybe a couple of weeks and I did it for 200 quid!

***House Of Whipcord* is odd because it was condemning prurient hypocrisy yet there was an undeniable element of prurient hypocrisy about it (just witness its pre-titles caption). Walker was reportedly surprised when the BBFC thought he was lampooning Whitehouse and Longford, but in fact he was quite a reactionary guy himself, wasn't he?**

Very much so, yes. The story he told me was that the censor at the time, Murphy, had thought the film was a satire and that Mrs Lakehurst was Mary Whitehouse. One never knew with Pete Walker what was true. I accepted everything he told me when working with him but subsequently learned not to. I don't know how that pre-titles caption came about, but the official story is that he came back from the censor and decided to add it. This was very late, just before the release. And what that was all about, golly, I just do not know. It's another example of writing and producing stuff without knowing the true meaning of it.

We were just trying, as you say, to make mischief, trying to get people into the cinema, which wasn't always easy. You had to give them certain things which included, in this case, naked women being whipped. That was very important indeed, the basic premise of the film. That's all I was aware of and then, flash twenty or thirty years forward, and suddenly the films of Pete Walker are "fascinating depictions of social unrest in the 1970s". And that's extraordinary! This is because they were being made at the time of the three day week.

When one first saw *House Of Whipcord*, back in the day, you could tell that the people in it were maniacs because they had set up a private prison and that's a totally insane idea. Nowadays, of course, prisons - like everything else - are being privatised and suddenly the film seems very prescient.

I know!

I wonder if anybody lobbying against prison privatisation might want to screen *Whipcord* as a salutary tale, a cautionary warning.

Oh that would be wonderful, yes. I'd never thought of that, John.

Maybe it could arranged?

That's terrific, yes, the fact that the most rubbishy films can appear to predict the future. I love that!

There are so many daft things in that film. Penny Irving trusts a guy who's name is Mark E. Dessart and his idea of making her feel at ease is pretending to cut her face. And then, why don't the prisoners just rush the staff and take over? They're sitting there eating their porridge with just these two old lesbians supervising them.

Good point. But of course if this happened there would be no film, as one always says. The fact is that we couldn't afford a film with a fully staffed prison!

Whatever the logical shortcomings in all these Walker films, Sheila Keith just shines, what a find! So where did you find her? Was it just an agency job?

Once again, all we've got is Pete Walker's official story. As you probably know, he always tried to get big stars in his films. Sometimes he succeeded. We're talking stars of the past and he did get Leo Genn, but all the women he claimed he wanted

for *House Of Whipcord* said no, so he just started asking agents for suitable actors. He went a lot with one particular agent who gave him Sheila Keith and she was a supporting actress, you know, she did mostly character parts in sitcoms. She'd never done anything like this before and I remember Walker telling me right at the beginning of shooting that Sheila Keith was marvellous, he got on with her very well right from the start and as a result she became an ageing *Scream Queen* in many more Pete Walker films.

She's quite extraordinary in them. It must have been very gratifying for you to see her speaking some of your *Frightmare* lines in *Dr Terrible's House Of Horrible*, nearly twenty years after the event...

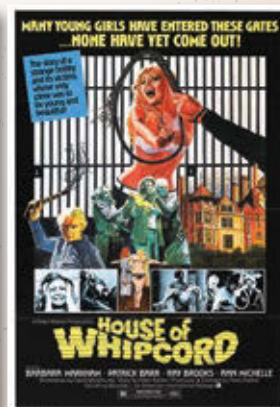
Yes, that was a delight. I later met the actor who wrote it, Graham Duff and he's now a Facebook friend. He told me that yes, he was inspired by Sheila Keith in *Frightmare* and of course I was chuffed!

You were saying that the big stars were promised but never materialised. It must have been very disappointing to you that, at various points you were going to write lines for people like Vincent Price in what became *Satan's Slave*. And there was talk of Cushing doing *House Of Mortal Sin*.

And if you hadn't had this breach with Walker, I guess you could well have ended up writing for a stellar cast of horror legends in his *House Of Long Shadows*.

"It could have been me"... but it wasn't meant to be, that's all I can imagine. Yes, it was always very disappointing because all of the films I wrote for Walker originally had all star casts and as we know we ended up with Sheila Keith and Anthony Sharp, which made for perfectly good films but it meant that they didn't have the box office power that they would have done. These films weren't enormously successful. If you read Steve Chibnall's *Making Mischief*, which Pete Walker checked every word of, you'd be under the impression that these films did better than they actually did. Nowhere in that book is mentioned the £23 that *Frightmare* made on Christmas Eve, or whenever it was. But it was a huge disappointment when the films got terrible reviews and then of course nobody went to see them. And in those days, that was it, no videos, no DVD and as far as I was concerned, that was it, they'd never be seen again.

Below: Lashings of fun and suspended sentences being handed out in the McGillivray/Walker cult classic, *House of Whipcord* (1974)





Above: David at a screening of *VHS Forever* in London with *The Dark Side* Ed Allan Bryce and his wife and also business partner Yannie

We know that the films you wrote for Norman J. Warren were made under the pressure of dire economic circumstances, but one gathers that Walker was independently wealthy. Has that been exaggerated? What was his motivation to get into the movie business when he was some kind of property magnate?

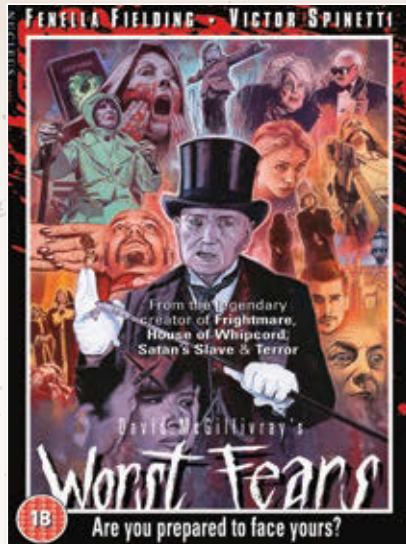
He had a lot of money early on in the glamour industry, this is a matter of record. He was a rival of Harrison Marks and Stanley Long in making those little 8mm films that lasted about 3 minutes and were available via mail order and sometimes under the counter. The women in them would either take off most of their clothes or get into sexual situations and it was a real money spinner, I gather that's how he was able to get into making features. His early features, e.g. *School For Sex*, also made a lot of money and he invested it wisely. When I started working for him he was already a property magnate, he would talk a lot about properties he owned but he was always very, very careful with money because it was his own. As far as I know, he never had any backing. He was very very careful, I was going to say very mean as well. In fact he was mean as far as wages were concerned and this is why, let's be honest, he couldn't get Peter Cushing. He couldn't afford him. But he was very generous to me, he'd always take me out to dinner and I never paid, so he was a complex man.

Proverbially, that's the thing that aspiring writers dream of, isn't it? Free meals.

Oh yes. We went to smart restaurants like Wheeler's. He liked living the high life, he had a Rolls and a house with a swimming pool. My eyes were like saucers, I'd never met a man like that before and he was like me, you know? He'd come from nothing and he loved movies so I could relate to this... millionaire. It was quite an extraordinary relationship.

He was certainly a contradictory character, as you say, directing glamour and exploitation stuff, only to come out with the immortal quote: "I can't stand tits, bloody horrible things!"

Oh, the trouble I got into for that! Because that article which came out in *Films & Filming* was the one I wrote when I was still at the BFI. They'd shelved it, then, because



of a certain amount of success he had with *Whipcord* and maybe *Frightmare*, the *Films & Filming* editor took this article off the shelf and flung it into the next issue. I'd completely forgotten about it but yes, there was Walker saying things that he never would have said to me while I was working with him and he was absolutely livid! I got a phone call at 8 o'clock one morning and I was gobsmacked, I didn't know any of this was happening.

It must have seemed like a good idea to him to say that at the time. But these things come back to haunt you.

They do, I'm afraid. Why did he say it? Why did he say any of those things? He was being very, very honest. All I can think of is that he had never been interviewed before and didn't know the rules. He was much more careful later on, much more guarded. But he was completely honest with me about the fact that his films were rubbish, made for tuppence ha'penny.

It's the Gerald Ratner syndrome.

It is, isn't it? It wasn't planned either, he was stone cold sober. But he didn't know the rules, he just said anything and I printed it all, as well. It was censored as I remember, because of disparaging comments he'd made about Susan George. She'd walked off *Die Screaming Marianne*, which was chaos, I gather. He was always very disparaging about his actors, another thing that surprised me. Not Sheila Keith, of course. Everybody else, he detested.

Another of his notable quotes ran along the lines of "all actors are temperamental queens and all the women are prostitutes".

"All actors are egotistical poofs". You couldn't get away with this now, "and all actresses are pompous prostitutes".

If Walker's background was in the skin trade, was the increasing gore and violence in his films mostly down to you?

Certainly with *Frightmare*, yes. You know how that came about?

In the aftermath of a plane crash in the Andes, where the survivors resorted to cannibalism until they were rescued?

Yes, a friend of mine told me that story

and as soon as I heard that there had been cannibalism on a mountain and that brains were the first thing to be eaten. One of the survivors had been a medical student. I knew that this had to be a horror film. So I rang Walker up immediately and I think all I said was "Cannibalism!" That was it, and we were writing the next day. So yes, I loved horror films and this, as far as I was concerned, was going to be the type of horror film that I used to enjoy watching, with plenty of gore. That was always very important to me, brand new for Walker, of course, he'd never done anything like that before and he just wasn't interested in horror films. He wouldn't even use the word "horror."

He liked to talk about "terror films".

Yes, he thought he was inventing a new genre. But as far as I was concerned *Frightmare* had to be as gory as possible and we went too far, the time wasn't right. Was it only... you tell me... three years later we had *Cannibal Apocalypse* and all of that? The public certainly just wasn't ready for heads being drilled open with a Black and Decker in, what was it, 1973?

As a film critic you must have been seeing stuff that was coming in from the States, *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* et al, so presumably you were ahead of the curve regarding gory developments in horror films.

Well, *Blood Feast* was like the Holy Grail. I and so many others had read about this film and seen pictures. There was no way in those days that we could actually see a film like that, so it was just hovering over me.

No doubt when you finally saw the thing you thought: "Oh my god, what a load of old rubbish!"

I know, it was just such a shock that it was so bad, we had no idea that films that bad could actually get released in America. That just wouldn't happen in Britain, where everything still had to go through certain channels to the BBFC, but these films, as we now know, were just being shoved out there to drive-ins. There was no control at all, wonderful! How exciting to have been able to work at that time! If I could have my life over again, I'd have worked there during that period. But yes, I was trying to recreate *Blood Feast*, a film I'd never seen!

And you did much better...

Well, thank you very much!

Though I guess it would have been impossible to do much worse!

That's true, nothing could be worse than *Blood Feast*, although it's still great fun and I enjoy it enormously! **DS**

In our next issue David spills more beans on Pete Walker, discusses his work with Norman J. Warren and the long and painful gestation of *Worst Fears*. We'll be finding out about several tantalisingly unrealised projects and there'll be guest appearances by Tony Tenser and The Sex Pistols. How could you resist?

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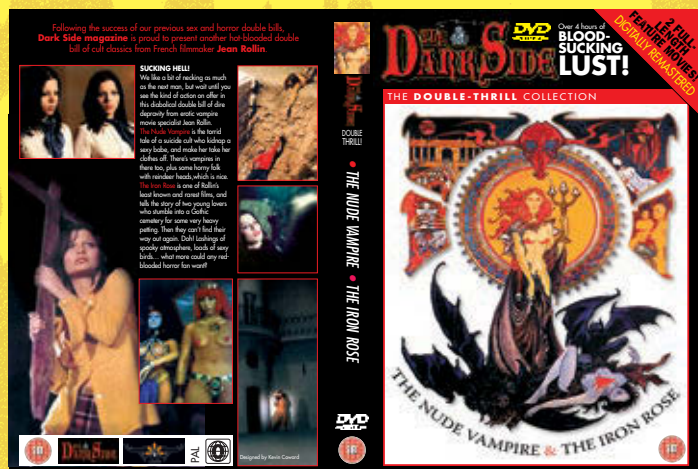
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WHOOPIE CUSHING

As a painter with Van Gogh's ear for music, Rick Melton's motto is, 'If it ain't Baroque, don't fix it.' His incisive look at Hammer's *The Evil Of Frankenstein* is likely to earn him a brush with the PC police...

“A nd stay out, you stiff nickin' ghouls!” yells the mayor of Turgu, as Victor Frankenstein and Hans run for the hills followed by a blizzard of rotten fruit.

“Friendliest town in Romania, my arse in parsley!” howls the Baron as a mouldy grapefruit bounces off his head.

“Honestly, sir” puffs Hans, “I think it's time to consider some other career choices. This is the tenth town we've been slung out of this month!”

“Rubbish!” spits Victor. “I'm not quitting until I've built my very own walking, talking, living man! Anyway, we're only a few miles from my old home town of Karlstad, we'll be safe as castles there.”

The colour drains from Hans' face. “But Baron, didn't you barely escape from Karlstad with your life, leaving all your precious possessions behind?”

“That was 7 years ago, Hans. The villagers have short memories. We'll just pop into my house and gather up a few priceless paintings to fund our venture. We'll be back in business before you know it!”

The pair arrive in Karlstad just as the sun is coming up and are soon standing in the shadow of Frankenstein's impressive mansion.

“Wow” squeals Hans. “What a pad!”

“You ain't seen nothing yet,” boasts Victor, “just wait until you feast your eyes on all my treasures. IKEA has nothing on this lot.”

However, the Baron's smile soon fades when he opens the front door and finds himself looking at four bare walls.

“SHIT!” gasps Victor. “Some bastard's been in and nicked the lot!”

“Surely not!” yelps Hans. “Did you leave a window open? Key under the doormat?”

“What's the world coming too?” blubs Victor. “I only nipped out for a few years.”

“Well, it's not all bad news,” chirps Hans. “At least they didn't take your collection of *GoreZone* magazines.”

“No, but they've taken a dump in my fireplace and wiped their arses on them,” snuffles Victor before sagging to his knees. “Mind you, they do the trick nicely.”

Hans puts a comforting hand on the Baron's shoulder. “I think we should be off now, sir,” he cautions. “It's only a matter of time before the locals realise you are back and try to lop your head off again.”

“Bugger that!” spits Victor. “We're going to cleverly disguise ourselves and go down the pub to drown our sorrows.”

Minutes later, Victor and Hans are in the Rutting Boar doing their best to blend in.

“I don't like it, Baron” bleats Hans “We're not blending in at all, everyone's looking at us.”

Victor waves Hans words away and reaches

for his cheese and pickle sandwich. “Stop worrying. They're probably just a bit curious about our refined accents.”

“Really?” remarks Hans. “You don't think walking up to the bar in matching sequined eye masks and ordering two Woo Woo cocktails perked any interest then?”

Before Victor can reply, his old sparring partner, the burgomeister, strolls in. Looking resplendent in an expensive velvet suit and dripping in jewellery, he's immediately shown to the best table in the house where he joins the Chief of Police and cuddles up next to a hot chick with tits the size of the national debt.

This turn of events sends a tsunami of Woo Woo and pickle spraying from the Baron's nose and immediately sets him off on one.

“The fiend! The black hearted fiend!”

“Baron, please!” splutters Hans. “Calm down, you're drawing attention!”

“Sod off! That S.O.B's got all my stuff! That's my expensive suit, my treasured jewellery and my hot chick with tits that can be seen from space! I'm telling on him!”

And with that, the Baron marches straight up to the very same cop who chased him out of town in the last movie and starts hollering in his face.

“The burgomeister is a thief, Chief!” he screams. “All this stuff he's got on belongs to Victor Frankenstein; a man incidentally whom I've never met and who is probably a million miles from here!”

Unfortunately, despite Victor's cunning smokescreen, the Chief immediately sees through his disguise and soon Vic and Hans are once again shrieking off down the street with the filth on their tails.

Suddenly we switch to a wooden stage where, below a sign boasting the words ‘The Amazing Zoltan’, a naked fat man is brutally violating himself with a marrow whilst wailing into a plastic snout.

“Squeal, little piggy, squeal!” roars hypnotist Zoltan as the audience laugh themselves into fits of convulsions. Eventually the pig man rogers himself into a coma and a smug Zoltan turns to address the audience. “Ha! That was a laugh, wasn't it? But if you think that's the most humiliating act you'll see tonight you're wrong, because now it's time to serve up a big sloppy slice of humiliation EXTREME!”

“Even more humiliating and extreme than when that guy tweaked out his Cheeto shaped willy on *Embarrassing Bodies*, Zoltan?” yells a woman at the back.

“Yes, madam. That, and then some! All that I need now is a brave gentleman from the audience who...”

Just then, Victor and Hans come howling into the crowd and fight their way to the front.

“Quick, Hans!” pants Victor as he leaps onto the stage. “We can hide up here!”



Rick's daughter Sonja gets an award for putting up with him

“My, oh my!” beams Zoltan “TWO brave gentlemen! Julie, bring out BOTH rubber chickens and an especially big bar of lard!”

Two hours later, our bewildered heroes stagger dizzily from the stage, totally naked apart from Hans who is still firmly stuck up his chicken.

“It just won't come off, sir!” bleats Hans. “Can't we stop at a butcher's and buy some more lard?”

“No time, Hans,” barks the Baron. “We must quickly acquire some more clothes and head up into the hills!”

Soon, the two chums are being blasted by sleet as they try to negotiate the frozen Carpathian mountains.

“Fu...fu...fu...fu...” stammers Hans.

“I know,” shudders Victor. “Perhaps we should have made for the beach instead.”

“YOU TH...TH...THINK?” chatters Hans, who by now must be seriously questioning Frankenstein's much ballyhooed genius. But just as he's contemplating booting the Baron down a ravine, Victor spots a young beggar girl panning for gold in an icy stream.

“Look Hans, we're not the only silly sods up here. Let's see if this young lady will put us up for the night!”

The beggar girl, Mirela, seems only too pleased of the company and it's not long before Victor and Hans are sheltering in her cosy cave, tucking into some stale doughnuts. Although the girl is deaf and dumb, the Baron soon manages to interpret her sign language.

“What on earth is she doing up here all alone?” asks Hans.

“Well, she says she's not alone,” answers Victor. “Apparently she has a boyfriend called Big Frankie who's encased in a slab of ice over her bed.”

“Boy, I bet she can't wait for the spring thaw,” laughs Hans. “Talk about a frigid date!”

Mirela thrusts her finger into a doughnut, rolls her eyes and jumps up and down before pointing to the mountains and a picture of Richard Branson in *Esquire* magazine.

“What's that she's saying?” queries Hans.

Victor brushes some crumbs from his lips. “She says that Frankie might be a crap shag but at least he isn't skipping through the Carpathians with a chicken on his dick.”

Suddenly, a loud crashing sound emits from the beggar girl's sleeping quarters; apparently her guests' extra body heat has weakened Big Frankie's frozen slab and he's fallen from the roof, blitzing her bed in the process.

After checking out the carnage, Mirela turns to the boys and thrusts out one hand whilst touching her crotch twice with the other.



Stomping from the room she angrily kicks a bowl of honey-covered Brazils up the wall.

"What the hell's that all about?" cries Hans.

"I'm not sure," ponders Victor, "but I think she said, 'You two pussies better buy me a new bed or I'll boot you both in the nuts'. But never mind that, look at what's lying here before us; my very first cobbled up big man!"

"Good Lord," gasps Hans. "Is he alright?"

"Well, I think so," answers Victor. "Some krunt has taped a cornflakes box to the top of his head but otherwise he seems perfectly OK!"

Soon, Big Frankie is sitting in front of a roaring great candle wading through a list of people Victor wants him to stomp.

"Right, Frankie. This here is a list of all the people who've gotten right up my nose in the last seven years. Firstly, you can go give that red-headed tart, Elizabeth, a good smack. If she's still with that poncy Paul you can smash him too. Then go crunch the Burgomeister, the Police Chief, the cocky priest at my first execution, that bunch of ungrateful pox ridden patients that put me in intensive care, the snotty doctors that kicked me off the medical council, the meat-eating monkey that pooped in my shoe and about 600 torch wielding villagers. Oh yea, and while you're at it, go splat that family on the Tesco adverts."

"Bloody hell, Baron" blurts Hans. "What did they ever do to you?"

"Nothing," spits Victor. "They just really get on my tits. Seriously, I ask you, just HOW OLD is that fucking kid?"

Obviously, we are gearing up for a big, sizzling climax and as I don't want to spoil it for you I'll sign off with one of those 'proud dad' moments.

As you've probably heard me mention before, my youngest daughter, Sonja, manages Whitewall, one of London's most successful art galleries. She is pictured here at their awards ceremony after being given a super trophy and a big fat cheque for keeping me out of it.

But enough of all this cloying sentimentality, join me next issue when we get stuck into the Collinson Twins.

Oh yes, oh yes!

RICK MELTON – ARTIST TO THE STARS!

Brinke Stevens



Judy Matheson



"No job too demeaning!!!"

"An amazing talent"

Emily Booth, actress and television presenter.

"Possibly the best Blu Ray cover this year... or any year"

DVD Review/Return to Nuke 'Em High.

"The definitive Corruption poster, an instant classic"

Bob Murawski, Grindhouse Releasing.

"An amazing painter, the consummate artist"

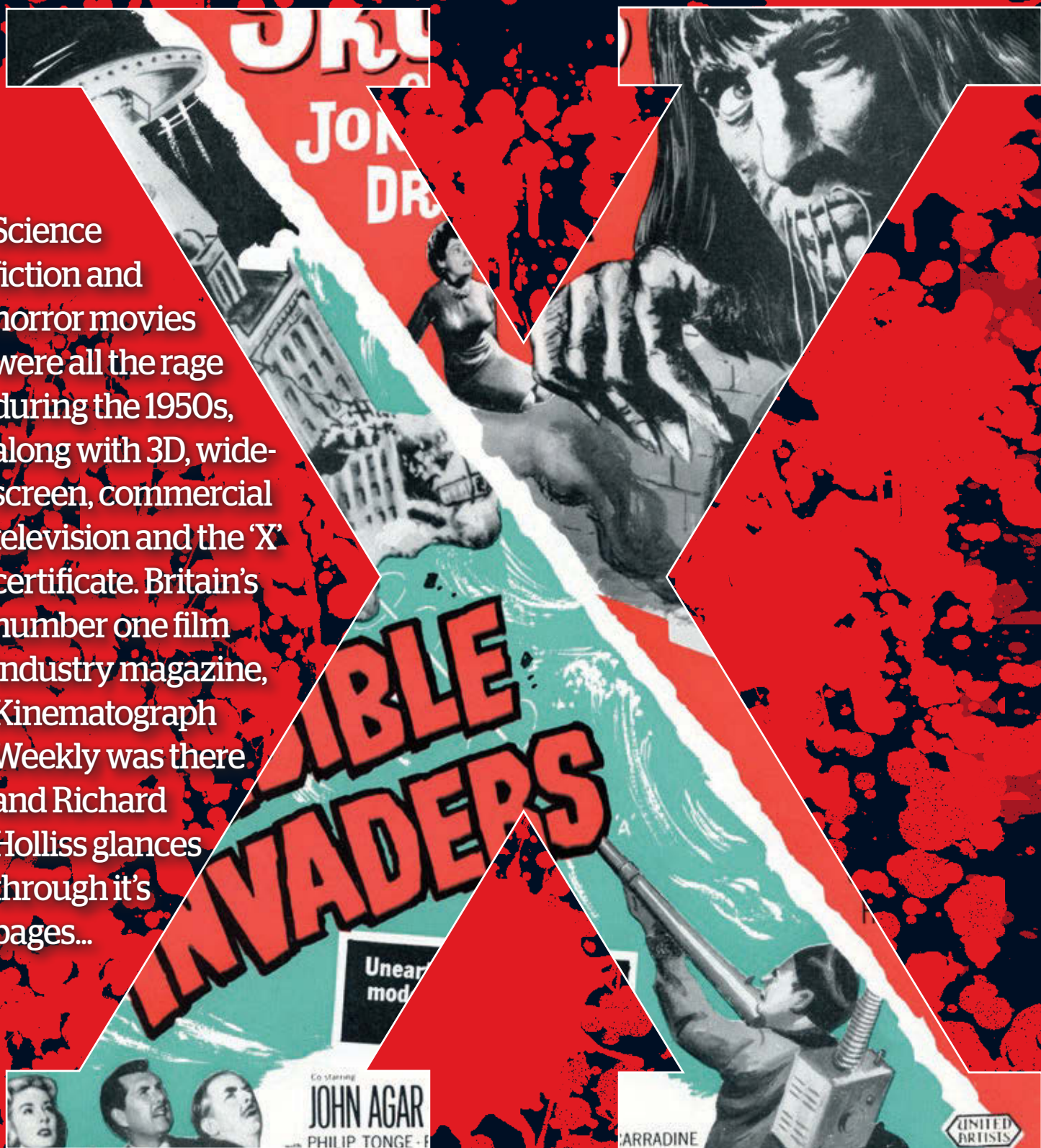
Allan Bryce, The Dark Side Magazine

"I wouldn't hang this shit on my walls if you paid me"

Sally Melton, wife.

Yep, gushing tributes all. To turn YOUR release into gold, contact Rick at www.stunninglysavage.com!

Science fiction and horror movies were all the rage during the 1950s, along with 3D, wide-screen, commercial television and the 'X' certificate. Britain's number one film industry magazine, Kinematograph Weekly was there and Richard Holliss glances through it's pages...



CERTIFICATE MEMORIES

With one or two exceptions, film magazines covering science fiction and horror movies were thin on the ground throughout the 1950s. American specialist titles like *Famous Monsters of Filmland*, for example, didn't appear on the scene until the end of the decade. In the UK in particular, the majority of mainstream film magazines preferred to concentrate on star portraits and Hollywood-style gossip, and very rarely would they devote a single page to the fantasy film genre.

Some of the best coverage was actually left to the trade publications such as *Today's Cinema* (later *The Daily Cinema*) – a flimsy eight-page magazine that usually prided itself on eye-catching trade ad covers – and the more successful and comprehensive *Kinematograph Weekly* (which boasted sales of 6,500 copies per week by the mid-fifties). The magazine was originally founded in 1889, and changed its name to *Kinematograph Weekly* in 1907 and then *Kine Weekly* in 1959. Aimed at the film industry in general, its contents included film reviews; trade show information; industry news from around the world; opinion columns; the latest updates in cinema exhibition and behind-the-scenes coverage on new movies being filmed at the UK's then numerous studio facilities. Larger format, like its American equivalent *Variety*, it had by the mid-forties shrunk in size. In 1971, it was briefly merged with *The Daily Cinema*, before being relaunched four years later as *Screen International*.

INSIDER JARGON

Unlike most mainstream film magazines (*Picturegoer*, *Picture Show*, *Sight and Sound* and *Films and Filming*, etc), *Kine Weekly* (KW) also had its own inhouse jargon. Terms like 'Class Halls' meant London West End and city centre cinemas; 'Industrial Halls' were cinemas in more working class or suburban areas; the 'ninepennies' referred to the less discerning patron or the cheap seats (usually the stalls), and 'long hairs' was the rather unflattering description given to the academic film critics.

During its heyday, one of magazine's greatest strengths was its numerous pages of trade adverts. Often in full-colour, these eye-catching designs were usually lifted directly from the relevant film poster artwork. Sadly, over the years the majority of these repro posters were removed by film collectors and the rest of the magazine then discarded. In fact, for this very reason, complete issues published before 1950 are almost non-existent. Fortunately, the British Film Institute, the British Library and the Cinema Museum still own comprehensive collections.

As part of its brief, KW also covered the horror films of the 1930s and 1940s from studios such as RKO and Universal, with a mixture of reviews, studio-based reports and colourful adverts. Science fiction films were, however, a rarity before 1950 – exceptions to the rule included *Things to Come*, 1936, and *Dr. Cyclops*, 1940 – and it wasn't until the flying saucer scare; the birth of the atomic bomb; and the public's growing interest in outer space, that Hollywood began taking an interest. So the decade became synonymous with the science fiction film, as well as a number of new technologies, including the extremely popular widescreen format and the less successful 3D boom.

In the UK, the 1950s also heralded the arrival of the new 'X' certificate. Up until that time the 'H' (horror) category had been used by the British Board of Film Censors (BBFC) to restrict non-adult audiences from seeing movies with frightening scenes, such as the earlier Universal *Frankenstein* and *Dracula* series. But with the horror film cycle on the wane by the end of the 1940s, it was decided that a new certificate



should be created to tackle not only adult-themed movies, but some of the new (less deserving) science fiction titles as well. KW kept tabs on the new certificate and often questioned the rationale behind its use. The BBFC's then current secretary, Arthur Watkins, also shared this view when he complained that too many exhibitors were exploiting the new rating in an 'undesirable way'. "The board," he told KW, "would have to take whatever action it could to prevent this, because the type of film being given an 'X' is not the type which can be called 'juicy.' The category is not a home for undesirable films, but it is a method of making available for exhibition films of genuine merit which should be seen by all normal adults." It was left to the bewildered reader to

decide what he meant by 'normal adults'.

POPULAR THING

One of the first science fiction films in which the use of the 'X' certificate proved to be a boom to the box-office and no doubt 'normal adults', was Howard Hawks' *The Thing From Another World* (the title of which speaks for itself). KW had no reservations in calling the movie, "An infallible money-spinner for popular and industrial halls, despite its 'X' certificate."

The magazine went on to make comparisons between the movie's numerous shock moment and the cliffhangers in a modern serial (weekly serials were still a staple diet of 1950s cinemagoing). "The picture, sheer baloney," said KW, "is so artfully encased in persuasive and convincing scientific data that interest is firmly held and terrific suspense created, while the stage is set for the 'Frankenstein'-like thrills." The magazine also considered the film's climax to be a "real corker," and just the very "thing" to put new life into jaded box-offices."

And so it did. On August 7th, 1952, KW announced how film-hungry crowds broke through the 'nine shillings' ticket barrier to ensure that *The Thing From Another World* broke every box-office record in the history of the London Pavilion at Piccadilly Circus. Having a poke at the 'long-haired' critics who dismissed the movie as codswollap, it went onto state that, "Such was the movies popularity, the police had to be called in to control weekend crowds outside the cinema."

KW also picked up on that fact that the 1933 classic *King Kong* ("an exciting and imaginative perennial") was due for a re-issue in 1952. Although it was not considered frightening enough for an 'X' certificate, the film still carried the slightly less controversial 'A' rating, for scenes thought to be too violent even for the less shockable post-war audience.

King Kong's special effects were created by the genius of stop-motion cinematography Willis O'Brien. In 1953, his pupil Ray Harryhausen, launched the first movie in his solo career and kick-started the cinema's love affair with science fiction monsters. *The Beast From 20,000 Fathoms*, which was inspired by a short story called *The Foghorn* by Ray Bradbury, was a 'boy's own adventure' story about a dinosaur that is awakened by an atomic explosion and wreaks havoc in New York City. Without any logical rhyme or reason, however, the BBFC decided to rate it an 'X' certificate.

In its review for the film, KW called it "*The War of the Worlds* and *The Lost World* in one." and opined that, "Nothing can stand between it and certain popular box-office success." Which considering that it was up against the sudden emergence of 3D wasn't bad going. And of the decision to give it an 'X' certificate, KW said, "It's so obviously down the schoolboy's street that it seems a shame the censor did not stretch a point and give it an 'A' certificate. Something surely should be done to enable the over twelves to see and enjoy wholesome horrific."





Above:
Vintage press books and posters were never short on hyperbole, and who could resist a double bill of Colossal Men and Cat Girls?

WHOLE SOME HORRIFIC

Although the censor had chosen to restrict Harryhausen's marauding Rhedosaurus to the over 16s, 'wholesome horrific' certainly should be enjoyed by all youngsters, claimed the *Times Educational Supplement's* film critic Janet Hills. According to *KW's* 'Close-Up' column in February 1953, Miss Hills felt very strongly that there was, "No evidence to suggest that children who enjoy Punch and Judy (a traditionally violent seaside puppet show) start throwing their younger brothers and sisters out of the window."

But the censor was adamant and continued giving 'X' certificates to the kind of films that were the staple diet of the 'Punch and Judy' audience across the pond, including the aforementioned *The War of the Worlds*. George Pal's version of H.G. Wells' novel about a Martian invasion was considered far too terrifying for UK audiences. Yet, here was another movie that proved that the 'X' certificate was a definite plus. When it opened in April 1953, *KW* proudly announced that it had broken box-office records at the Plaza Cinema in London's West End. "It opened on Good Friday and throughout the weekend played to capacity business," said the magazine's Josh Billings excitedly. "*The War of the Worlds* has thus shattered the records established by many Paramount hits during the boom period of the war years and the Plaza management state that they have never before experienced such a big demand for seats. The queues, which began to form at 10am were the largest ever seen outside the cinema."

But the proliferation of the 'X' certificate for a growing number of both dramatic and science fiction titles prompted the Cinema Consultative Committee to warn that its increased use

would seriously limit family audiences. So, by the end of the year, the BBFC had reinforced its draconian attitude towards movie censorship, when its secretary told *KW*, "We continue to cut ruthlessly any unnecessary violence – whether in a film which will eventually receive an 'A', 'U' or 'X' certificate." A few months later the magazine reported that the censor was now editing more films than ever before, with minor or substantial cuts made in 384 titles, while 10 were rejected outright.

A NEW DIMENSION

The 'X' film also went three-dimensional in 1953 with *House of Wax*. "It's the number one West End hit," claimed *KW*. Running for 21 weeks at the Warner Theatre in London, the film's success certainly put 3D on the map, with audiences clamouring for more of the same. Soon afterwards, the magazine noted that, buoyed by this success, the ABC circuit was to equip 100 of its cinemas with 3D for the release of the film, including mobile stereophonic sound equipment.

A second 3D movie, the 'A' rated *It Came From Outer Space* was also doing well at the London Pavilion. "The success of *It Came From Outer Space* proves that pseudo-scientific films have definitely caught the fancy of the present generation without whose support no theatre can survive," said *KW*.

Although no such kudos was given to the low-budget 'U' certificate *Robot Monster*, in which an extraterrestrial gorilla in a diving helmet tries to kidnap scantily clad earth women. "Science fiction hanky-panky, clumsily plotted," complained *KW*. "Seldom, if ever, have we seen such balderdash and bunkum."

While *It Came From Outer Space* and the inferior *Robot Monster* escaped the censor's obsession with the 'X' certificate, Warner Brothers' 3D horror film *Phantom of the Rue Morgue* was a much more suitable candidate. Based on a story

by Edgar Allan Poe, *KW* called the film, "Jack the Ripper and King Kong in one," adding, "It is definitely the last word in blood baths and should pack the London Pavilion (now the home for such fantasy pictures) for months."

Them!, the X-rated science fiction thriller about an invasion of Los Angeles by atomic mutated ants was, according to *KW* in August 1954, another runaway success. "*Them!* has broken practically every record at the Pavilion and the fans did not wait to be told that it is a winner. They knew instinctively that it was their cup of tea and were on the doorstep before most of the reviews were published." The magazine then concluded rather patronisingly, "It's funny, but the ninepennies make few mistakes."

X MARKS THE SPOT

Hammer Films, announced a slew of new movies in June 1955. According to *KW*, one of the studio's titles that would deliberately capitalise on the use of the 'X' certificate was the *The Quatermass Experiment*, based on the hugely successful BBC serial by Nigel Kneale. It was obvious that horror and science fiction movies, of which this film had its fair share of terrifying moments, were destined to make the 'X' film category even more successful than ever before. So the 'X' was unapologetically emblazoned across the *Quatermass* poster by substituting it for the first letter in the word 'Experiment'.

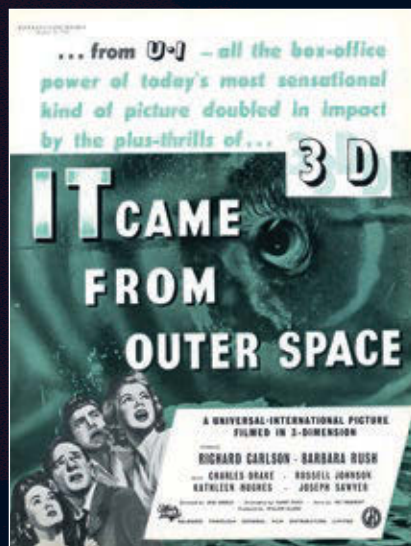
By the end of 1955, *KW* agreed with the majority of the industry that the 'X' certificate had become a major box-office asset and special praise was afforded the ABC cinema circuit for breaking the formidable 'X' certificate barrier. A few months later, the Odeon circuit also changed its mind in regard to such films, when it included them among its schedules. 'The 'X' certificate has been commonly associated in the public mind either with horror or sex," it told *KW*,



"which this organisation considered generally unsuitable to the family trade upon which so many of its theatres rely." Another possible reason for the Odeon circuit's change of heart was that cinema admissions were at their lowest in 15 years.

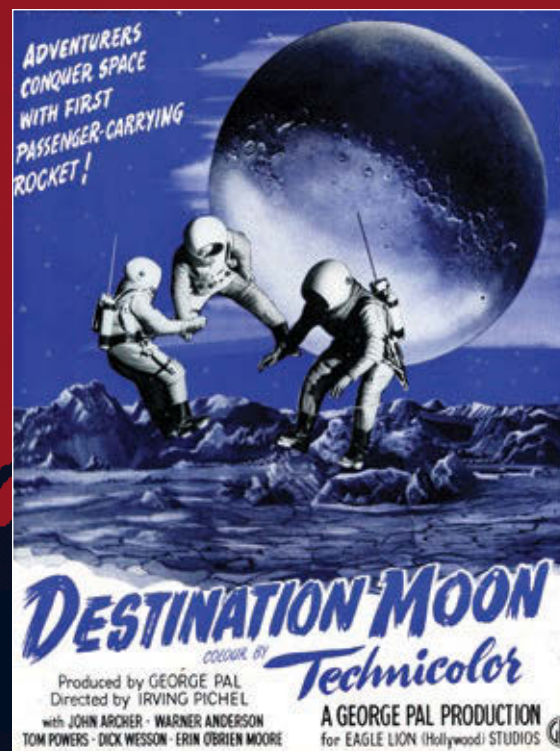
At the same time KW warned in an editorial that the sustained success of the 'X' picture nevertheless provides considerable food for thought. Citing *The Quatermass Xperiment* as a prime example, it also pondered on the censorship problem. 'This best-seller television series goes into practically every home equipped with a TV, but naturally it's left to parents to decide whether it's fit for children to view,' said the magazine. "But, when it comes to the screen version, the British Board of Film Censors usurps the prerogative and authority of parents and bars youngsters from admission."

It did, however, reinforce its support for the film in the following issue by praising the overall success of the 'X' certificate double-bill programme. "Whether *The Quatermass Xperiment* should have been given an 'X' certificate was down to personal opinion," it opined, "But thanks to its pairing with a French movie called *Rififi*, the formula has rung the box-office bell and we must expect a spate of 'X' certificate twin-sets." Taking them at their word, Independent British distributors



began scouring the international film scene searching for adult-themed foreign movies to couple with their own releases. "The British Board of Film Censors certainly started something when it created the 'X' certificate," concluded KW, "And nobody knows where it will finish."

Eros distributors were one company, for which the double-bill 'X' programmes meant big business, including such B-movie fare as *The Man Without A Body* and *Half Human*. Although these failed to get major circuit bookings, the



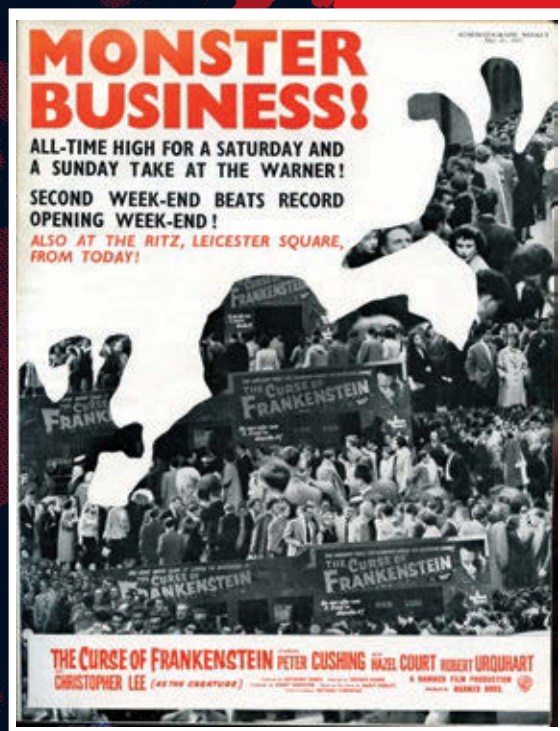
independent exhibitors snapped them up. One key 'X' film also proving a mega-hit for the distributor was *Godzilla King of the Monsters*. Eros's managing director Norman Hyams told KW, "Godzilla is a prehistoric beast who makes King Kong look like a midget and has already done tremendous business throughout America."

The success of movies such as *Godzilla King of the Monsters* was felt far and wide. So much so, that thanks to the growing popularity of the 'X' certificate and its relationship with science fiction and horror, the Watch Committee in Stoke-on-Trent had, reported KW, finally given permission for the 3D 'X' movies, *The Creature From the Black Lagoon* and *The Mad Magician* to be screened in local cinemas. While in the Sussex town of Worthing, a ban on all films displaying the 'X' certificate was also dropped. This decision, however, still rankled the local Watch Committee, whose Chairman, went on record to describe them as "morally indefensible and aesthetically repulsive!"

HAMMER BREAKTHROUGH

No doubt the Watch Committee members in both Stoke-on-Trent and

This page:
The 1950s was a great decade for sci-fi movies, some classic, some not, but even the mediocre ones had superb poster artwork



Above: This vintage pressbook trumpets the massive business that Hammer's first Frankenstein movie was doing at the boxoffice

Worthing choked on their fondant fancies when Hammer Films' garishly coloured horror movie *The Curse of Frankenstein* hit cinemas in 1957. "One of the big sensations in the West End," said *KW*, "This 'X' certificate horror film has proved, beyond all doubt, that the masses are particularly partial to movies that drip with gore and make their flesh creep."

Some months before, the magazine had been invited to a party celebrating *The Curse of Frankenstein* in a deserted wharf near the City of London. On hand were Hammer Studio's James and Michael Carreras, Tony Hinds and Jimmy Sangster. "Despite the appearance of a coffin, no one is dead," *KW* reported with some relief. "And certainly not Hammer Films, which is now regarded as Britain's

leading 'horror' company." In a separate interview, the film's scriptwriter Sangster added, "The whole concept of horror is different. The public is more hard-boiled since the Frankenstein pictures of the thirties. So many horrible things have happened since then that a film has to be really tough to get the desired reaction."

The desired reaction was also just what Roger Corman's B-movie 'X' certificate quickie *Attack of the Crab Monsters* hoped for and received, along with unstinting praise by *KW*, who said, "It is the crabs which put meat into the bizarre and chilling plot. What a nightmare!" Universal's *Lost World* movie *The Land Unknown* was, on the other hand, an unusual recipient of the 'X' certificate. Relating what happens when a group of explorers crashland in a prehistoric oasis in Antarctica, the magazine complained in its review for the film that "Brontosaurus's have stalked the screen so often that they've ceased to chill the spine and, in spite of its 'X' certificate, it's incredibly juvenile!"

The Hammer film version of *Dracula* appeared next and although *KW* were, to begin with, somewhat blasé about

its content. "The spine-chiller *Dracula* is hardly a super in the technical sense and neither can it claim to be an artistic masterpiece," it had high praise for its box-office potential. "It definitely has what it takes to appeal to the masses. They're turning up in their thousands to see it at the Gaumont Cinema, Haymarket, thereby proving that a film need not cost millions in order to coin money." Hammer's other big 'X' movie that month was the gory war story *Camp on Blood Island*. "It's paid handsomely for its keep at the London Pavilion," said the magazine.

There was some concern in the film industry, according to other *KW* headlines, about what influence television was by now having on ticket sales. This was nothing new, of course, as the studios had been in a collective panic ever since the BBC expressed a desire to screen old films in the early 1950s. But the future looked even gloomier since the launch of commercial television in 1955.

Two years later, *KW* reported how Universal-International had stopped supplying film clips to ABC TV's film programme *Box Office*. "It was impossible





Above: More great poster images from some of our horror favourites. We'd love to have been involved in that pandemonium at the Pavilion!

Ponds, 40 miles outside London, to watch the filming of *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, from the novel by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. "Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson have this week been investigating the Case of the Missing Sun," the magazine announced light-heartedly. "Due to the appalling weather conditions, we've split up into two units," producer Anthony Hinds told the magazine. "Our director Terry Fisher is back at Bray doing the studio work and I'm here waiting to get in the establishing scenes we were unable to shoot last week." Positive that audiences would embrace their take on the famous novel, Hinds concluded by saying, "If Conan Doyle had written the screenplay we are sure this is the way he would have done it."

One of the most talked about newcomers to the West End, alongside the Hammer product was 20th Century Fox's science fiction opus *The Fly*. "Many critics have warned their readers against seeing it," announced *KW* in August 1958. "But tell the masses that a picture shouldn't be shown and they'll

flock to it. The scribe who headed an article on *The Fly* with the words 'Is the X label enough?' deserves a pension from the film company." A week later the magazine was still singing the praises of this CinemaScope hit, when it commented, "The long-haired boys and girls (highbrow critics) tried, almost without exception, to swot this horror film, but the combined operation didn't have the slightest effect."

American producer Herman Cohen was also in town at the end of 1958, filming *Horrors of the Black Museum* at Merton Park Studios and *KW* dropped by for a chat. Cohen, the man responsible for such quota quickies as *I Was a Teenage Werewolf* and *Teenage Frankenstein*, told the magazine that he was, "Contemptuous of movie moguls who enter the horror field just to make a few quick bucks." And when asked whether 'X' certificate horror movies were suitable for teenage audiences, he rather glibly replied, "There's nothing corrupting in my pictures. Teenagers see those tough juvenile delinquent films and then go out

and buy themselves a bicycle chain, or fix themselves up with a set of knuckle-dusters. But no one can go out and make like a monster. That's where you could say I'm a protector of public welfare. People just couldn't do the things they see in my pictures."

HAMMER INTERVIEW

In 1959, *KW* rounded off the last year of the decade with another interview with the industry's pin-up boy Michael Carreras, who was currently working on his sixth production, *The Two Faces of Dr. Jekyll*, and reveling in the biggest box-office business of any film shown at the London Pavilion: *The Mummy*. This tale of an ancient Egyptian curse was, said the magazine, "A colourful horrific melodrama with a cast-iron pedigree." Although Carreras was quick to point out that the monsters, which for three years had made horror films a screaming success were on their way out. "We're no longer at the top of the cycle," he said. "Over the next two years we plan only two horror subjects – *Brides of Dracula*

HORRIFIC SHOWMANSHIP

In the 1950s the majority of cinemas were seldom less than 1,000 seaters. The interiors resembled palaces with plush carpets, art deco light fittings and staircases framed with arches and columns. There were also plenty of staff on hand to assist the confused patron, from the usherettes who escorted you to your seats, to the ice cream salesladies and uniformed commissioners.

Sometimes the front of the building would be covered in giant advertising displays. This front-of-house material might be on loan from the film company itself, or custom made by the more entrepreneurial of cinema managers. And when it came to ingenious ideas for selling movies, it was always the science fiction and horror titles (with their excellent visuals and far-out characters) that provided the most inspiration.

For the science fiction film *The Day the Earth Stood Still* (1951), the manager of the Princess Cinema in Peterborough, flew a saucer-shaped dustbin lid covered in silver paper on wires above the heads of his audience. To resemble the whirr of a spaceship, the stunt was synchronised with a recording of the 'uneary' sound made by a musical saw! In Hyde, Greater Manchester, the owner of the Hippodrome Cinema, hijacked the local carnival to display a 12ft-wide flying saucer constructed out of a corporation trolley, old conduit and some bits of canvas.

To promote *The War of the Worlds* (1953), the enterprising manager of the Pavilion created an atomic bomb pall which indicated the approximate area of damage to cinema's home town of Scunthorpe, should such a weapon be dropped there, instead of on the Martian nest outside Los Angeles!

While the same film was being screened at the Odeon in Sutton Coldfield, the staff rigged up flashing lights in the auditorium to accompany the on-screen visuals, and during its run at the Tivoli Cinema in Cambridge, the manager constructed a 7ftx5ft Martian war machine that toured the town on top of a small van.

For *The Beast From 20,000 Fathoms* (1953), the manager of the Roxy Cinema in South London, was lucky enough to borrow the distributor's official 'Beast' display, which was driven to a local rugby match attended by a crowd of over 7,000 people.

Cinemas lucky enough to be showing MGM's spectacular

Kine Weekly would regularly conduct a round-up of the best publicity stunts organised by cinema managers around the UK to promote the distributors latest movies



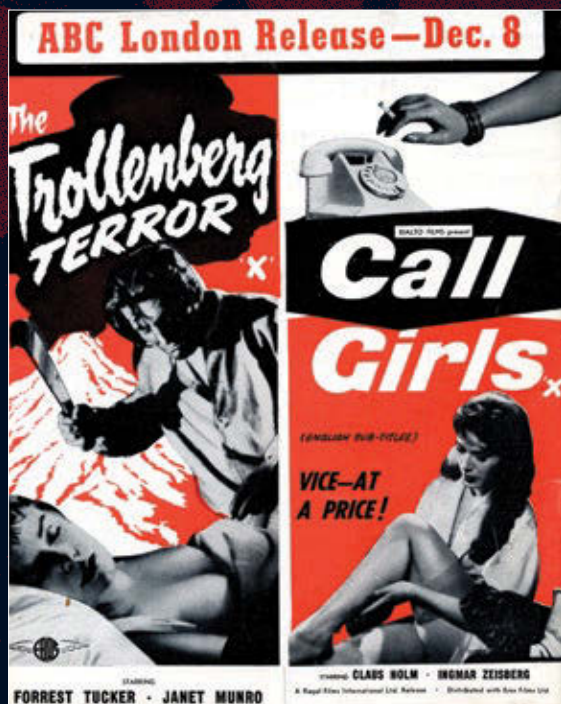
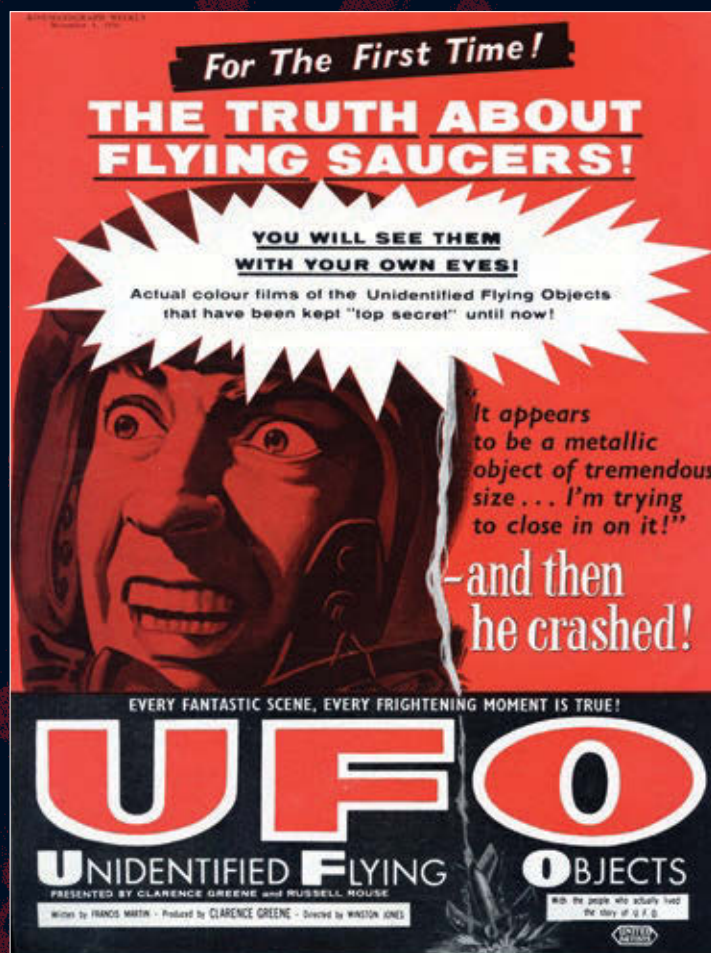
CinemaScope science fiction movie *Forbidden Planet* (1956), such as the Regal in Wembley, London, had the added bonus of a visit from the movie's mechanical star Robby the Robot. Robby put in a personal appearance wandering the streets and delighting the local children. He also dropped by the Majestic Cinema in Woodford, East London, and posed for photographs in a grocer's shop and on a stall selling fruit. Robby also visited two other London cinemas: the Regal in Streatham and the Ritz in Leyton.

Peter Cushing, who played Professor van Helsing in Hammer's movie version of *Dracula* (1958), was the guest of honour at the West End Cinema in Birmingham. A visit that was backed up by ghostly lighting effects, spine-chilling screams and the emergence of 'Dracula' himself from the cinema's orchestra pit. Official *Dracula* display material was also used in conjunction with the Gaumont Cinema in Hendon to advertise the fact that, because of the blood-thirsty Count, the St John's ambulance team had been doubled in strength during play week.

As part of Eros Films' exploitation for its 'X' certificate double-bill *Prehistoric Women* (1950) and *Two Lost Worlds* (1951), it filled its office window in London's Wardour Street with a bamboo cage, in which a scantily clad girl cavorted around in a leopard skin, while beating a tom tom and caressing a stuffed lynx. Needless to say, it caused an occasional traffic jam in Soho.

For the 3D release of *House of Wax* (1953), the assistant manager of the Ritz Cinema in Sunderland erected a display comprising wax heads, gallows, a guillotine and other grisly items associated with mayhem and murder. It was estimated that 50,000 people witnessed the display. While at the Savoy Cinema in Swindon, staff suspended cut-outs from the ceiling and placed wax models in other parts of the foyer to create a suitable atmosphere for the film.

Sometimes members of the public would be roped in to help. For the science fiction movie *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956), the manager of the Tudor Cinema in Huddersfield, arranged a midnight screening at which an eighteen year old volunteer sat through the movie with only a skeleton for company! "A bit gruesome, but I rather enjoyed it," he told *Kine Weekly*.



Above: We were all up for a bit of vice at a price in those days, and it was in pounds, shillings and pence too!

and *Phantom of the Opera*."

Carreras also acknowledged that censorship was more liberal than it had been in the recent past, although warned that there could be a violent reaction to this new found freedom. "Follow it to its logical conclusion and we shall be making pictures where no one dreams of wearing clothes," he told KW, "But in reality, public opinion and our own conscience will stop us well short of that." Interestingly, with hindsight we know this wasn't the case, as Hammer Films

actually went onto make dozens more horror movies and, by the end of the 1960s, were happily producing films filled with people (all pretty young women, thank goodness) wearing very few, if any clothes at all!

While Hammer Films were sounding more cautious about the horror film, the smaller distributors such as Eros were still making hay while the sun shone. In October that year, the company's 'X' double-bill: *Fiend Without a Face*, about thought monsters invading a Canadian air base, and *The Killer Shrews*, which brought a motley group of people to an island plagued by giant rodents was performing well at the box-office. "How about a nice juicy double 'X' programme?" said KW. Although the magazine was less generous about *The Killer Shrews* in its review. "The picture, made on a shoe-string, lets loose a lot of pooches, thinly disguised as inflated, snarling shrews, but they fail to chill the spine, and the stilted dialogue is just about the last straw."

Of the other low-budget 'X' certificate programme fillers that vied for position in the cinemas around London, KW was surprisingly favourable, including *A Bucket of Blood* ("The highbrows should enjoy the chilling laughs against themselves"), *The Giant Gila Monster* ("Reliable 'gimmick' offering"), *The Four Skulls of Jonathan Drake* ("Horrific hocus pocus expressly designed for the industrial ninetennies, which *Variety* considered suitable for youngsters"), and *Invisible Invaders* ("Appropriate padding

puts a bit of a kick into its surface action").

KW closed its coverage of the 1950s by stating that, "Science fiction and horror films have been acclaimed as box-office pick-me-ups." But as a footnote, it pointed out that curiously, in a list of subjects preferred by the public, they were near the bottom. "Indeed," added the magazine, "the only film which received less public approval was the rock 'n' roll subject!"

And, rather ironically, after all the vitriol that had existed between the industry and television, and the pros and cons of the 'X' certificate, the BBC's fortnightly programme *Picture Parade* rounded out the decade by interviewing the then secretary of the BBFC, John Trevelyan. "It was," said KW, "a no holds-barred discussion on where censorship should begin and end."

At the beginning of the 1950s there had been just one film rated 'X'. 10 years later there were hundreds. While horror movies would make a successful transition into the more permissive-led cinema entertainment of the 1960s, the public's fascination for science fiction began to wane. Television took up the mantle instead, with anthology shows and dramas such as *Doctor Who*, while movies of a more macabre nature were left to the 'X' certificate cinema audience. It was also a time of change for both the studios and the exhibitors, and throughout it all *Kine Weekly* continued its fine tradition of covering the industry both inside and out. **DS**

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IN THE NEXT HIGHLY-ANIMATED ISSUE OF

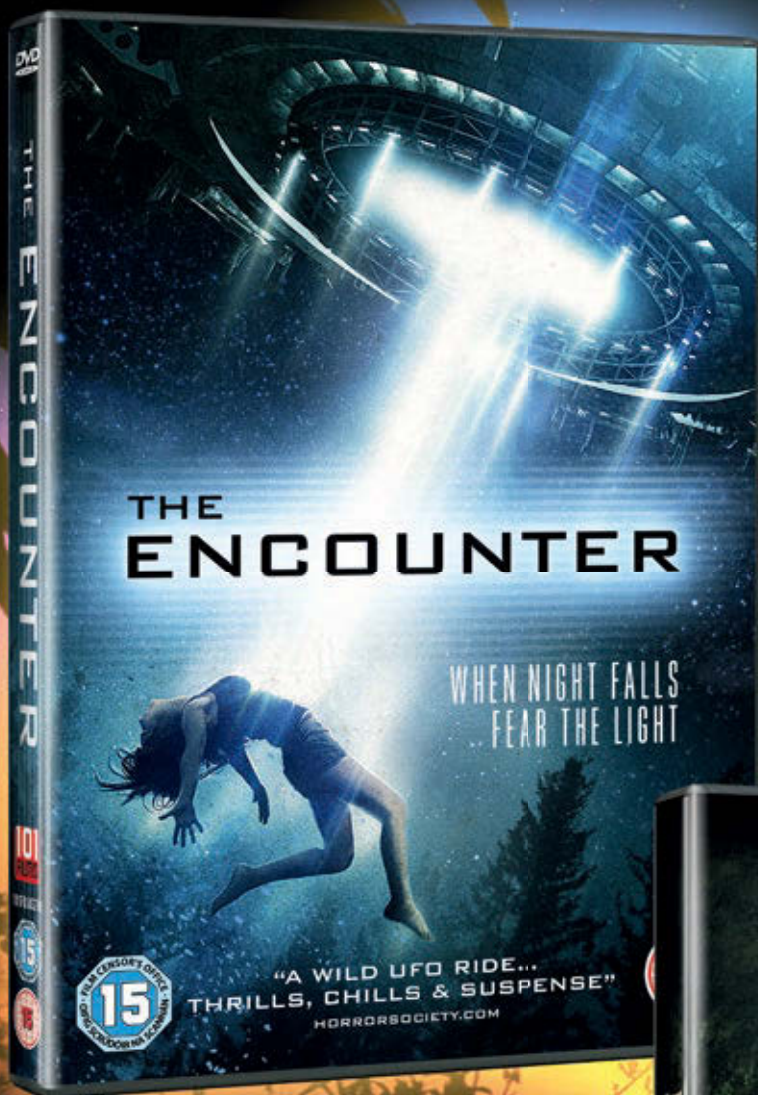
Doris Day once wisely suggested "the future's not ours to see," perhaps excusing her for all those dire romantic comedies she made with Rock Hudson (mind you, they did make a lovely couple). We, on the other hand, can safely predict that the next issue of *The Dark Side* will be arriving in shops at the end of May and will be a terrifying treat for boys and ghouls of all ages.

Although we reserve the right to change things (often because we just don't have the space to fit them all in), issue 175 is shaping up to have something for all tastes as usual. If you like Italian horror you will love our new interviews with director Umberto (*Eyeball*, *Cannibal Ferox*) Lenzi, stunt man Ottaviano Dell'Acqua (who played the famous maggot-faced corpse on *Zombie Flesh Eaters*), and Roberto Forges Davanzati, cameraman on *Cannibal Holocaust*!

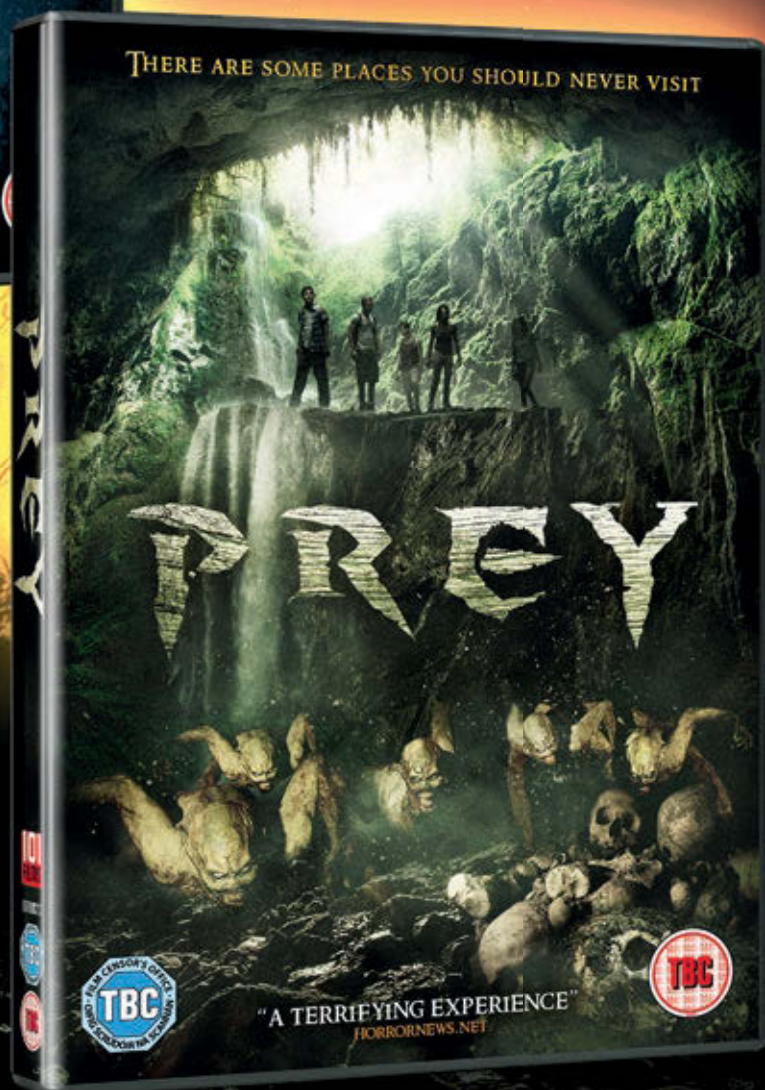
Our retro coverage will continue apace with a tribute to stop-motion genius Ray Harryhausen, a look back at the rare 1931 movie, *Phantom of Paris*, and that promised interview with Martin Stephens of *The Innocents* and *Village of the Damned* fame.

We will also be bringing you the second part of John Martin's epic David McGillivray interview and the redoubtable Mr M. chats with director Naomi Holwill about her new documentary on cannibal queen Me Me Lai. There's a lot more too, including our now regular news section and stacks of Blu-ray and DVD reviews, so be sure to keep an eye out for *Dark Side* 175, and save us having to come looking for you.





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